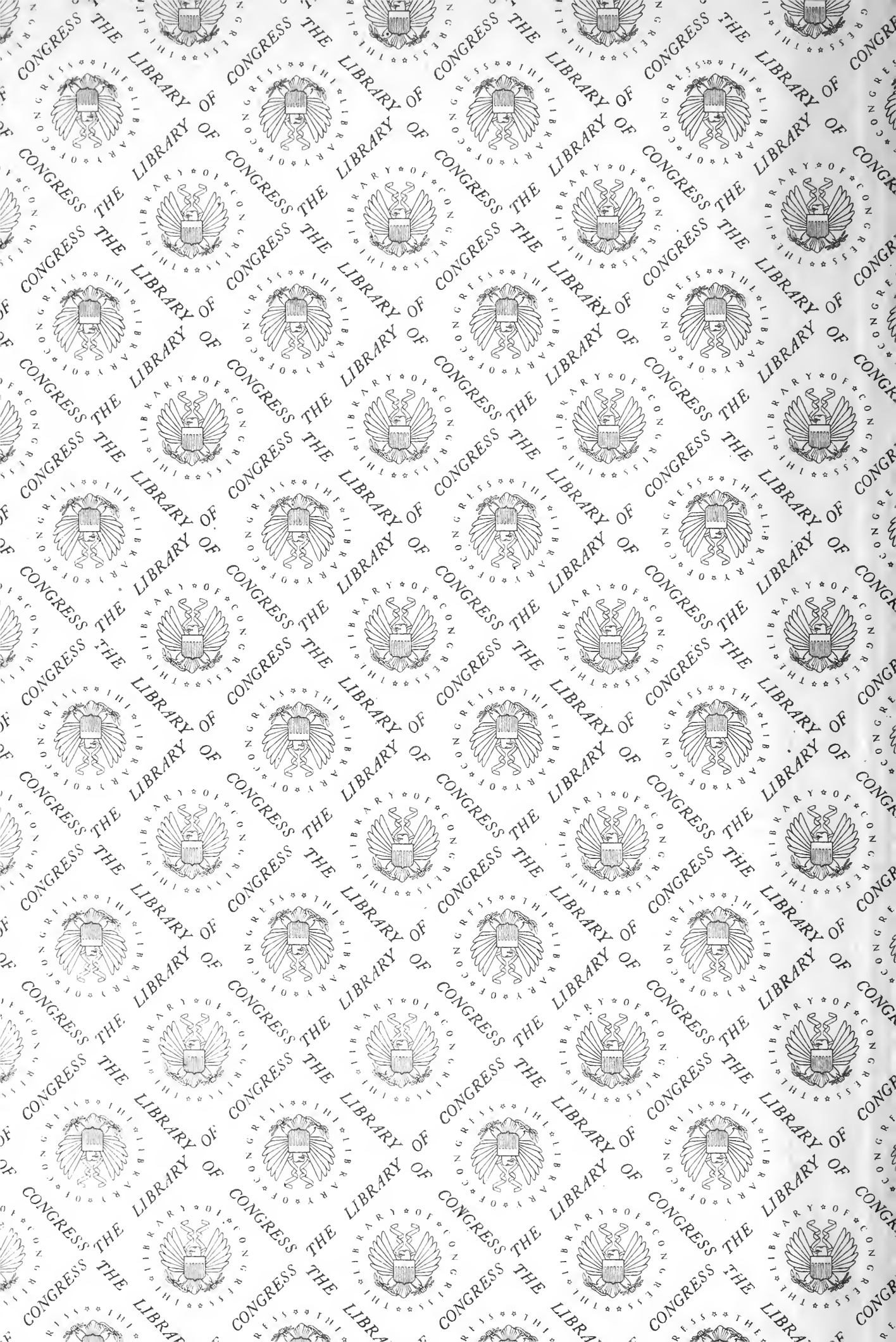
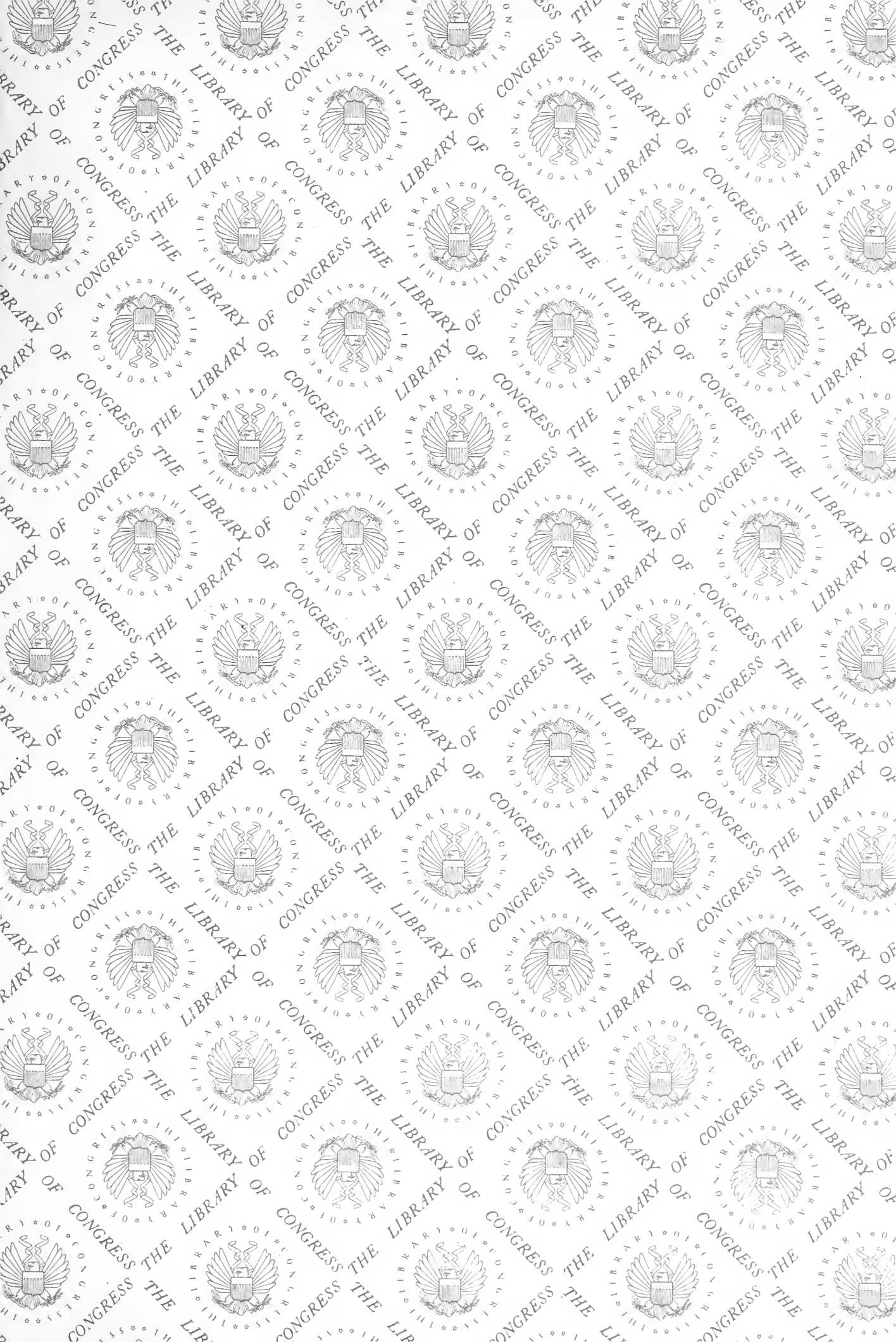


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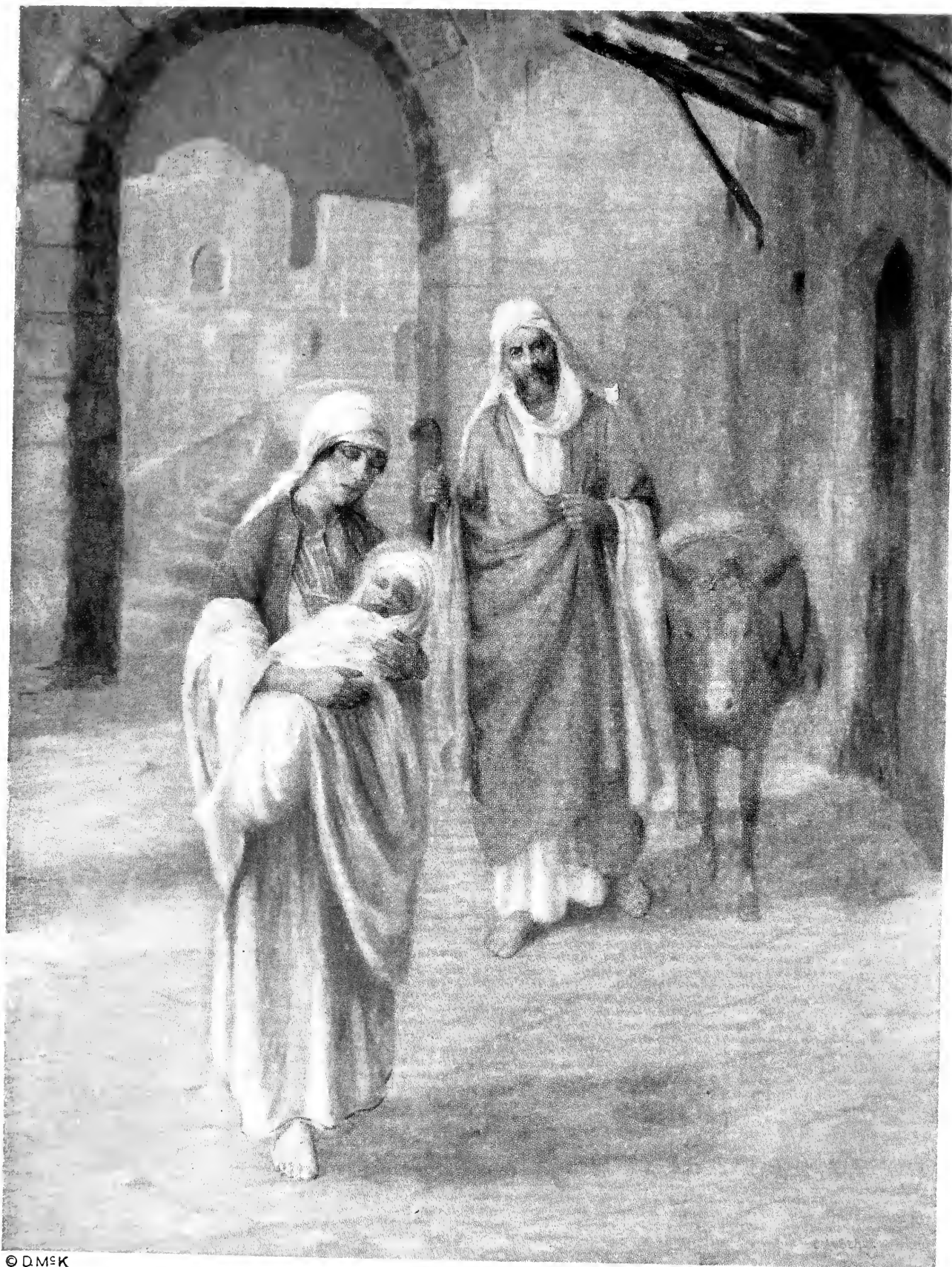
MARGARET LIVINGSTON HILL





Bible Stories for Children





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THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

*"Only the stars could see as they started for
the strange new land."*

Bible Stories for Children

By
MARGARET LIVINGSTON HILL



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Bible Stories for Children

I

IN THE GARDEN

ONCE upon a time there was a beautiful garden in which grew every kind of flower and tree. In the early morning the dear flower faces looked up all wet with dew and the fresh breezes brought sweet perfume through the long green pathways underneath the trees. Above in the branches the birds would sing sweet morning hymns.

Because the paths were carpeted so thick with velvet grass and trees hung low in some parts of the garden it was very pleasant to sit there at noon when the sun shone hotly outside. One might hear the hum of the bees going about busily from one flower to another, or perhaps the distant voice of the great river that passed through the garden to water it.

But the best of all in this garden was the cool, quiet time when the sun had slipped away and the birds had gone to bed. For then the Lord God came

down and talked with the man and woman who lived in the garden.

As Adam and Eve sat together under the trees in the cool of the day, God must have told them the long story of the making of all things.

Perhaps He told them more than we know about the years that passed before He put Adam and Eve into the garden. They would have enjoyed hearing of the strange animals living then, that are not now on the earth. Then He must have made them understand the awful punishment for sin that came to the earth, for everything living was swept away and even the earth was left an empty and shapeless mass and hung about with curtains of foggy clouds.

As they heard this story Adam and Eve must have pressed the grass and the firm earth beneath their fingers, very glad that God had so changed the earth by His words.

For while it lay in this awful state God's voice had sounded, light came, and the darkness was chased away by it. Again God spoke and great bodies of water rose and moved to their places. Things began to have shape and there was earth and sky.

Another great day came. With it the dry land stepped out from the oceans, and presently over its

gray brown plainness there came up tender grass and trees and all manner of plants, for God had said:

“Let the earth bring forth grass, and plants that have in them seeds each its own kind, so that there may always be plants and trees of all kinds growing upon the earth.”

And it was so, for all things God made obeyed His word.

The earth was beautiful then. Adam and Eve sat listening in wonder as they began to see the picture of God's greatness. For they had known Him as a friend.

The story went on then to the fourth day, when answering God's call there came into the dark roof of the sky a great light, and the earth knew sunshine once more. The moon also could be seen again and was set to rule the night. Many other lights God put in the heavens, some far away suns, some others made like our world. Maybe He explained to Adam why He put them there and how to understand their movements, showing him part of the great plan He has for us all.

On the fifth day God's word came again, and this time there was on the earth every kind of animal and bird and fish. All the little insects were there, as well

as great bears and elephants. But among all these there was no quarreling. None tried to hurt the other. A lion and a lamb might be together, but the lamb need not be afraid, for the lion would not want to kill it. Everything was then as it is going to be again in the time that is to come, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come back to the earth to rule as King.

This was God's story of the making of the earth and preparing it for His people. They listened as He told them how He had called them also into life out of the dust of the earth and breathed into them so that they could see and think and feel. That was the sixth day of His work—and God looked upon it and saw that it was good.

Then He rested for a solemn, quiet day. He made this Seventh Day a Sabbath as long and as beautiful as each of the six work-days that had gone before. God closed His story to Adam and Eve by telling them He blessed forever the seventh day, and made it a day holy to Him for all time.

Some time after they had heard this story Adam and Eve were walking through the garden, looking at the trees, and eating some of the ripe fruit which hung from the branches. They came to the middle of the garden where stood a tree especially beautiful and full of fruit.

Now they had both been told not to eat any of the fruit of this tree. But Eve stopped a little while in its pleasant shadow. A sound near by made her turn around. There was one of the animals of the garden looking at her with deep, wise eyes. It was a snake, not an ugly thing wriggling on the ground such as we see nowadays, but a beautiful animal with a glossy skin and very graceful movements. It spoke to her, for Satan—that bad spirit who is always trying to make us do wrong things—had slipped into the snake’s body, and now he said in a little, tempting voice:

“Why don’t you eat this fruit? It will make you know all about everything just as God does.”

Eve remembered what God had said, but she stood there looking at the fruit and listening to Satan’s voice. She looked so long that it began to seem right to her to take it. When she tasted it, she liked it so much that she called Adam, and he ate some too.

The fruit did not make them happy at all, though—it only made them think about themselves. They had felt as free and happy as the birds that morning, but now they realized that they had no clothes, and went quickly to work to fix some out of the broad fig

leaves. Their pleasant walking in the garden was done, for they were ashamed to look at each other or at the things God had given them because they knew they had done what God had told them not to do.

The evening came, and the Voice that they were now afraid of sounded among the trees of the garden. He was calling Adam. The fragrance of flowers was on the evening breeze and the birds whispered softly their good-nights just as on other nights, but it all seemed so different to Adam now. He was afraid to have the dark shadows come. He was too ashamed to answer the voice of God; it sounded solemn, and yet as full of love as before.

But there is no place where one may hide from the Lord God, and Adam had to come when God called again. Then, as he had tried to hide, so Adam tried to put the wrong of what he had done upon Eve, and answered the Lord:

“The woman you gave to me, she picked the fruit and gave it to me.”

Then God spoke to them both sadly, telling them how by disobeying Him they had spoiled the beautiful place He gave them, and so they were not fit to live there any more. He had to punish them by making

them work very hard and suffer pain. To remind them of it the snake was punished by being turned into the wriggling, wicked looking animal that we see nowadays.

God sent Adam and Eve away from the garden and put at the gate an angel with a sword of fire so that no one might go in there any more.

II

CAIN, WHO HATED HIS BROTHER

OUTSIDE the garden life was much harder for Adam and Eve than it had been before. Adam had to work to make things grow in the stony ground, where weeds and thorny plants grew often as fast as the wheat. Eve, too, had to learn to prepare the food and to make clothes from the skins of animals. Soon they gathered together sheep and cows and took care of them so that they might always have something for food and clothing.

Their oldest son was named Cain. He went often with his father into the fields to work, but his brother Abel liked better to tend the sheep.

Now since Adam and Eve had left the garden God had taught them many things to help them. He still loved them, and wanted them to live happily and love Him. They had taught their children that when anyone went against God's rules for them they must burn a lamb or other animal upon a pile of stones—called an altar—and pray to God, asking Him to forgive them. When a rule is broken someone must suffer, so God

allowed them to kill this lamb as a sign that they were sorry for their sin. That is the reason why Jesus Christ is called the "Lamb," because He was sent to die and take away the sin of everyone who will come to Him.

One day the two brothers, Cain and Abel, went to burn an offering to the Lord. Abel brought a lamb, one of the best he had. But Cain brought some of the things that grew in his garden, which were not what God had asked for. When God made Cain understand that He did not like this offering, Cain was very angry.

Instead of going out to find something that would please God, Cain began to quarrel with Abel about it. Hatred came into his heart because Abel had done better than he. The awful hatred grew as he talked, and at last he lifted up his hand and struck Abel so hard that it killed him.

As Cain stood there seeing what he had done, the Voice of God spoke to him, asking—

"Where is your brother?"

"I don't know," said Cain, "was I set to watch over my brother?"

Then God answered him, "Oh Cain, do you not see what you have done? Now you must run away from your brothers and sisters and be a homeless wanderer all the days of your life."

Cain bowed his head as though his punishment was too heavy to carry. But he did not say he was sorry. Instead he took his wife and went out from his home far away to strange countries.

III

THE FIRST RAINBOW

MANY years passed by. Adam and Eve had died, even their grandchildren were becoming old men and women and had many grandchildren of their own. So the earth had now a great number of people living in it.

But when God looked down on them from heaven He saw that they were still doing what Adam and Cain had done. They did not want Him to be their Heavenly Father, but instead they made up ways in their hearts to have a good time, believing they knew more than the Lord of Heaven and earth. All the time God kept on giving them beautiful things as he had given Adam a garden, and though they knew and understood the rules, they would again and again break them, which always put them farther from Him.

It was as if a father brought home a beautiful toy to his children, who when they saw it tore it to pieces, because each one wanted it for himself, forgetting entirely the love of the father who had bought it for them.

So here in the earth was each man thinking of

himself, and God was grieved. He knew that he must punish them so that the people would remember Him again.

Now there is almost always in every wicked city at least one good man, who tries to remind the people of their Heavenly Father. Noah and his family were this kind. The rest of the people never listened for God's voice, but He spoke to Noah.

Once upon a time He gave Noah a very strange command. He told him to make a boat large enough to hold his family, with a place in it for two of every kind of animal and seven of some kinds. God explained to him that the people had been given every chance to come back to Him, but they would not. Now every child did more wrong than his father had done and they were not fit to live any longer on the earth. So God would make the earth quite clean by destroying them all.

Noah set to work at once to build the great boat, and God told him exactly how to do it. The people must have gathered about as he worked, to ask him why he was doing this. Then he and his sons reminded them again of God and begged them to come back to Him, before they should all be killed. But they laughed or were angry with him and went off upon their own ways.

When the great ark was finished Noah brought in the animals and put them in their places and led in also his wife and children. The other people must have made great fun of them as Noah's family went in, prepared to stay for several weeks.

And then the rain came, first a few drops, then faster and faster grew their sound on the roof of the ark. Inside, the people looked at each other and were quiet as they started on the strangest journey that was ever taken in a boat. Then it must have been that Noah as the father of his family spoke to their Heavenly Father to ask Him to be with them wherever they were going. The sound of the rain was rushing now like a waterfall. The ark trembled and then began slowly to rise from the ground, carried up by the deep water that had already fallen. Still the rain fell—through the long days and nights.

There was plenty to eat in the ark, for God had told them how much to bring. So they lived quietly in this strange place for five months, until the ark came to rest upon the top of a mountain called Ararat. And then they still had a very long time to wait until the oceans of water were gone and they could step out on dry ground again.

For three months the waters grew gradually less

and less. Then one day Noah opened a little window high up in the ark and looked about. Far off against the sky were dark blue lines rising above the smooth waters around them. These were the tops of mountains like the mountain upon which their ark had come to rest.

After waiting patiently for forty days more, Noah allowed a raven and a dove to fly out of the window, to see if there would be a tree uncovered from the waters for them to alight upon. The people were very sad when the birds came back, for they knew that that meant more waiting.

About a week later Noah opened the window again. This time the air that rushed in was sweet like the sunny smell of a daisy field in the summer time. The dove flew out and was gone all day. Toward evening they heard her wings fluttering at the window, and Noah let her in. In her bill was an olive leaf. When they saw this, they all shouted for joy and thanked God that He had brought them safely out of the awful storm.

They waited another week, and this time the dove did not come back when it was sent out. By this they knew that there must be growing things for food and trees to nest in now upon the earth.

After a few days the earth was quite dry and God told Noah that he might now open the door of the ark. Noah's wife and his sons and daughters stepped out into the wonderful new-made earth, with their hearts as good and clean before God as the fresh grass that shone in the sunshine. They knew then how strong He was, and that nothing was worth while but to obey Him.

God had one thing more for Noah's people to hear. While the animals rushed gladly out into the sunshine God said quietly to the people who had gathered into a little prayer-meeting:

“Behold, I am going to make a promise to you and to everyone who lives on the earth! Do you see over in that cloud the big arch of all colors that touches the earth and the sky? That is a rainbow which I have put there as a sign that never again will I allow rain to fall until it becomes a flood to destroy everybody.

“When great rains come then you will see My rainbow here in the cloud for a promise, between you and Me and every living creature forever.”

IV

THE TOWER OF BABEL

DOWN on the broad level plain of Shinar there was a sound like the noise of a great city. Some men were making plans, some shouting orders, others were digging, or mixing mud and straw to make bricks. Everybody was working with his whole might, as though he were running a race.

Someone, probably their ruler, Nimrod, had a plan that he was sure would make him as great as God. The people all joined heartily in it, forgetting so easily the lesson God had taught their fathers at the flood time. Their wish was to build a tower that would touch the sky and so reach heaven.

They had started to go far out from one another, each family to find plenty of room to live in, because they were continually quarreling over their possessions. But they decided not to do this, saying,

“Let us stay here and make a great name for ourselves and be rich!” As they worked together upon this tower which they hoped would make them so great, God looked down on His children sadly again, and

sent to them a punishment which made them obey Him.

Up to this time all the people had had the same language, but now they all began to speak differently, so that they could not understand each other at all. The people could no longer work together and finally went away in all directions, as God meant them to do.

Always after this they called that city "Babel"—which means confusion.

But, sadly enough, they quickly forgot God again, and in their new homes they began to make little clay dolls to pray to. Very often they knelt before the sun or moon or some animal instead of trying to speak to the One God who had made them and loved them.

THE PROMISE TO ABRAM

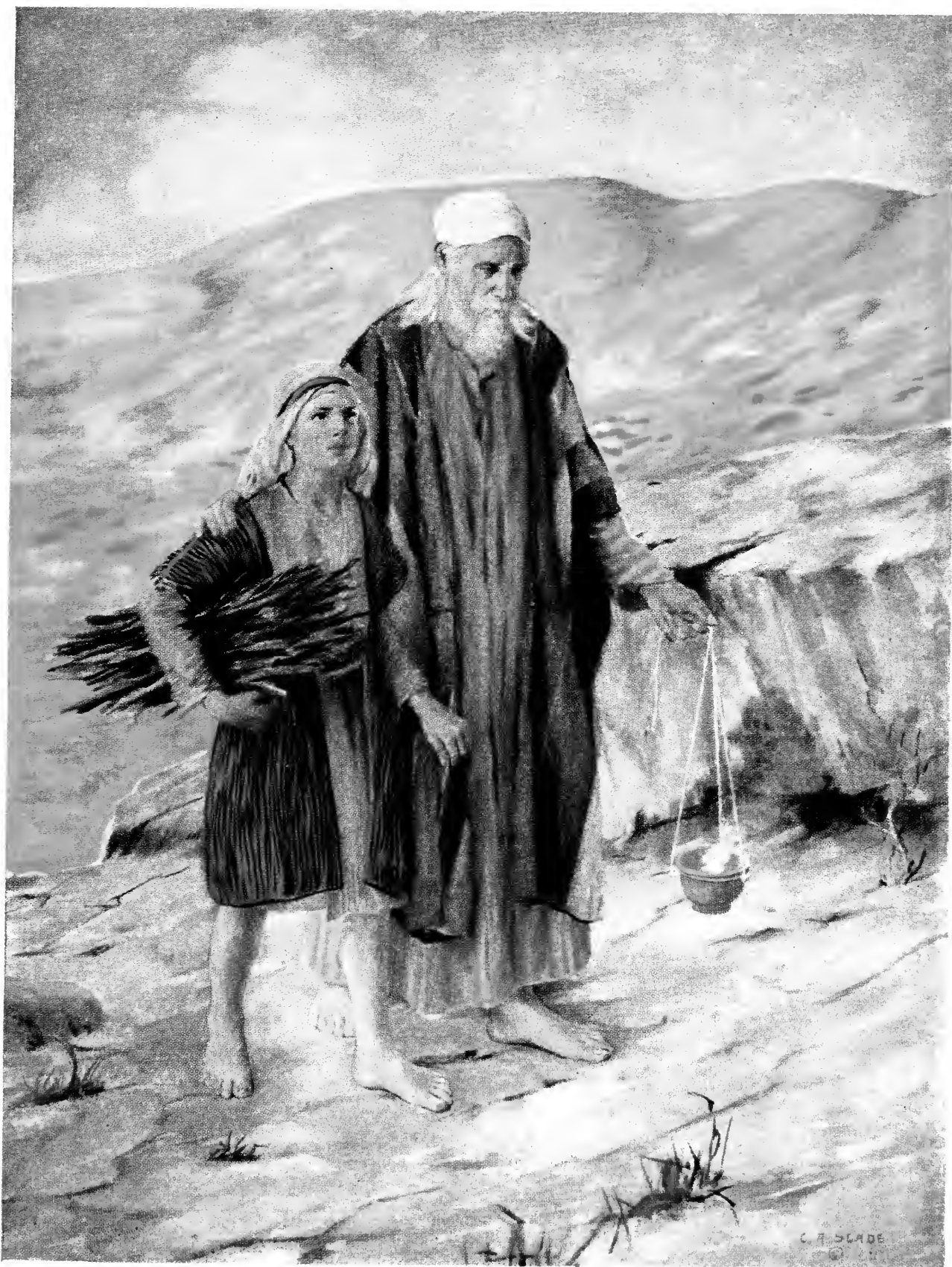
NOT far from Babel, about two hundred years after the people had tried to build the tower there, lived a very rich man named Abram. He had not only silver and gold, but many fine flocks of sheep and goats, and herds of cows as well. The country here was very pleasant and the earth gave good crops.

He lived a quiet, happy life among the people he had grown up with—many of them his cousins—and he had a very beautiful wife.

One night God spoke to Abram, and told him to leave his home and the country he loved and go out to a strange land. He said,

“Go, Abram, I will take care of you and your children forever and make you happy, and through you everybody on the earth may find a way to be happy.”

Abram did it. He did not know anything about the new country that he would be given, but he trusted God to know best.



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ISAAC AND ABRAHAM

"My son, God will find a lamb for the offering."

He took with him his beautiful wife Sarah, and his brother's son, Lot, who had been left in Abram's care when the brother died.

They traveled very slowly, not at all as we move from one city to another nowadays. For they had to drive with them all their sheep and goats, and put up their tents every night beside a pasture land. In the morning the servants would attend to the animals, pack up the tents, and strap on to the mules' backs the great loads of things that they were carrying with them. Then they would start off, moving slowly like a great army.

So they crossed over into Egypt where everything seemed very strange to them. They stayed here for a long time, but God sent them out again, for that was not the country He had chosen for Abram.

He sent them instead to a land called Canaan, farther north than they had ever been before, and bordering on the great Mediterranean Sea.

Canaan was almost like a garden, it was so full of good things. Everything grew here easily. Lot and Abram stood together on a hill top one day and looked down on the beautiful fresh greenness of the valley where the Jordan River ran. They had been troubled by quarrels among their servants. Lot's shepherds

would say that Abram's men had taken a pasture that belonged to Lot, or the other way about. So Abram said to Lot:

"See, here is a whole land before us"—he pointed to the valley and the distant hills—"why should we not separate? You choose which part of the country you want for your home, then I will live somewhere else, and we shall each have plenty of room."

Lot was quiet for a minute. The hills were steep, but in the valley it was easy to travel about. The river ran through the valley, as well as many smaller streams. Along its banks all kinds of plants were growing—a rich tempting green.

"I will live in the valley," said Lot, choosing what he thought was the best for himself.

Now the people who already lived in the valley were a great deal like those who had to be destroyed in the flood. They were so busy trying to have a good time that they quite forgot about God. Lot and his wife and children went to live among them and, although they knew better, they began to be very much like them.

Later, when the cities grew so wicked that God had to send two angels to burn them up, He allowed Lot and his wife and their two daughters to escape.

But Lot's wife looked back at the city after she had been told not to turn at all, and she was changed into a strange white pillar of salt. So that Lot, after choosing the rich valley with its gay cities, was left with none of his wealth nor his servants nor cattle—even his wife was gone.

Abram in the meantime went up to live in Canaan, far away from the cities in the plain. As soon as he came to a place where he could live, God spoke to him again, saying:

“Look, Abram, as far as you can see, to the north, to the east, to the west and south. All the land that you can see from here I will give to you and to your children and to all their children as long as the world lasts. And from this day in which I have made you the promise, your name shall be changed from Abram to Abraham, and the land of Canaan shall belong to you and your children forever. Some of them shall be kings, and they shall be a great nation.”

Abraham believed God's promise, but he could not understand it very well, for he had no children. He kept hoping though that some day he would have a son, and then he would teach him about God, and this one would teach his own children until some day there would be a great race of people all living here obeying

and loving their heavenly Father. But the years went on, and though Abraham and Sarah were getting to be quite old, still they had no children.

One night Abraham went out of his tent and walked away off to the top of a hill, and looking up at the stars he began to speak to God about it.

“O dear Father in Heaven,” he said, “I know that You haven’t forgotten me and I believe the promise You gave me so long ago. But I cannot understand at all how it can ever happen now. How can I who have no son or daughter be the father of a great race of people?”

Then God said, “Look up at the sky, Abraham, and try to count the stars there. I promise you, Abraham, that in the great race of which you are to be the beginning there shall be more people than the number of the stars!”

Abraham did not understand it yet, but he went away from his talk with God believing more than he ever had before that God was true and would keep his word.

Not long after that there came three visitors to the tent door asking for Abraham. They were strangers in the land and very uncommon sort of men, tall and fine looking. So Abraham and Sarah entertained them as well as they knew how and were very much pleased

with them. After supper, as they sat before the tent watching the stars come out, one of the strangers suddenly turned to Abraham as though he had known him a long time and said,

“Abraham, you and Sarah are going to have a son!”

Abraham was very much surprised, for he had not told anyone about God’s promise—and how could this stranger know?

But the man went on to tell him just when the child would be born, and that nothing was impossible for God to do.

Then the strangers told Abraham what work they had been sent to do, so that he understood that they were angels. He was happy, for he knew then that their words were true.

When the little boy Isaac was born there was great joy in the tents of Abraham and Sarah and all their serving people. The child was beautiful and was loved by everyone.

Isaac was brought up with the tenderest care and always taught to love most of all His Heavenly Father, to listen for His word and to obey it. They lived on in great happiness together, Isaac growing taller now and stronger in his mind and body as he learned the lessons that Abraham taught him.

One day when Abraham was praying alone God gave him a very strange command. He told him to rise up early the next morning and travel far up to the top of a certain hill, and take a pot of coals to start a fire and a bundle of wood as men used to do when they burned an animal as an offering to God. Abraham had often done this, as a sign that he loved God or was sorry for something wrong that he had done.

But this time God did not tell him to take a lamb or a bird as a sacrifice to burn upon the altar. He told him instead to take his dear little son, Isaac.

Now if Abraham had been a different man, one who had not followed God's word even when he did not understand it, he would probably have said:

“Never will I do such a thing as that! I will not obey a God who asks such things as that! Why did He give me a son, if I am to burn him on an altar?”

But Abraham knew God well enough to know that whatever He did was right, no matter how it might seem to a man. So he bowed his head and promised to do it, although he was full of sorrow.

The next morning when they started out together no one knew, not even the boy at his side, the awful thing that lay before Abraham to do.

As Isaac ran along happily beside his father he

suddenly noticed the quiet sadness on Abraham's face. His father was always full of fun and laughter and it was strange to see him sorrowful.

Isaac stopped running about and walked in silence by his father's side, to show him that he too was sorry for anything that might have hurt his father.

Together they climbed the steep mountain in silence, the little boy keeping step with the long stride of the man.

Suddenly Isaac noticed that there was no lamb for the sacrifice, and thinking his father had forgotten it, he spoke quickly,

"Father, look, here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for an offering?"

Abraham put his hand on the boy's shoulder, hardly daring to look down at the face he loved,

"My son," he said, not ready yet to tell Isaac what must be done. "My son, God himself will provide a lamb for the offering."

Isaac was full of awe and wondered whether they should see God at the top of the mountain, but he said no more until they reached the spot.

Then he helped his father to lay the wood upon the stones carefully so that the fire would catch. When all was ready, Abraham took the cords he had brought

and bound them about the boy and laid him upon the altar. But as he took up the knife to obey God's word the voice of an angel called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here am I," said Abraham.

"Do not hurt the boy, for now I know that you love God, because you are willing to give Him everything you have."

His hands trembled with joy as he unfastened the cords that bound Isaac.

A little sound in the bushes made him turn around. There was a ram caught by the horns. He freed it, and offered it as a thank-offering upon the altar in the place of his son.

Abraham and Isaac must have stayed on the mountain a long time that day talking to God, and waiting to hear His word. Isaac never forgot that day through all of his life, for he came to know well his Heavenly Father, who repeated before Isaac the wonderful promise.

When Abraham and his son came down from the mountain their faces shone with the brightness of that beautiful talk with their Heavenly Father.

The long journey home they went happily.

VI

THE STOLEN BLESSING

WHEN Isaac grew up he married a woman of their own people whose name was Rebekah. They had two sons, Jacob and Esau.

The boys were almost the same age, but Jacob was very different from Esau, who loved to play outdoors so much that he would run off the first thing in the morning and sometimes not come back until almost dark. He would take with him his bow and arrows and learned to hit whatever he aimed at. So that as he grew up he became a very good hunter.

But Jacob did not care for that kind of play. He would sit at the door of the tent and dream about what he should do if he were a man, and wonder how it would be to live on the other side of those hills that looked so far away and blue against the sky.

Jacob was quiet and gentle, and very thoughtful of his mother. So that Rebekah grew to love Jacob more than Esau, whose ways were rough and noisy.

Now it was the custom among these people that the oldest son should have a particular blessing from

his father at the time when the father gave an inheritance to each of his sons. The father would ask God to be very good to that oldest son. It was a great honor in this family, for it meant that God's promise to Abraham was passed on to that oldest son.

Esau was older than Jacob, and as the time drew near for one of them to be given this blessing, Jacob wanted it for himself. "I ought to have it," he would say to himself; "he knows only how to hunt and kill, but I can think and plan."

One day Jacob was thinking about this as he went about his work in the tent. He was making some good thick soup out of red beans, which he knew that Esau loved. Pretty soon Esau came striding along through the sunshine, and sat down at the tent door, hot and dusty from the fields. He said to Jacob,

"I feel as if I should die if I do not have something to eat right away! Give me some of that good soup I smell."

Jacob looked at him in disgust. What a way for one to look and act who should some day soon be a kind of king in the family, as the oldest son!

"Of course I will give you some, Esau, if you will give me your birthright."

"Surely," answered Esau carelessly, "what do I

need of that now? I won't live long enough to enjoy it if you don't soon give me food."

"Promise me first," said Jacob, making sure of this good thing for himself.

So Esau swore to him to give up his blessing for a dish of soup, and forgot from that minute what he had done.

But Jacob did some careful planning.

Not long after this Isaac called Esau to him and said to him:

"My son, I am growing very old. Before I leave this earth I want to give you my blessing, for you are my oldest son. Go out into the woods and kill a wild deer or goat, and prepare it in a dish of meat as you know I like it. When you bring it to me I will bless you."

So Esau hurried out. Rebekah had been listening, and because she wanted Jacob to have the blessing she called him and told him what to do. She sent him for two small goats from their own flocks and herself cooked the dish of meat.

Then Jacob put the goat skins over his hands to make his father feel that his hands were rough and hairy, and so think that he was Esau. For Isaac was now so old that he was nearly blind, and could not see Jacob's face.

“My father,” began Jacob when he came into Isaac’s room.

“What! Have you come so soon?” asked Isaac, surprised. “But this is not Esau, for it is Jacob’s voice I hear.”

“This is truly Esau, your oldest son,” said Jacob, putting up his hairy hands for Isaac to feel. These and the clothes he wore, which Jacob had stolen from his brother, made Isaac sure that this was Esau. So he stretched out his arms above Jacob’s head and prayed:

“May God bless you and give you the dew of heaven, and the good things of earth. May you be a king in your house and even your brothers bow down before you.”

Jacob rose up from his knees and went out. He had hardly gone when Esau came in with a dish of meat for his father. Isaac was very sorrowful when he found that Jacob had lied to him and stolen the blessing, and he died very soon after. Esau was angry at his brother and wanted to kill him, but Jacob had left his home, and traveling alone had come into a far off country.

VII

JACOB MEETS THE LORD GOD

THE skies were growing dark. Here and there a star slipped out; but its tiny candle could not light the great darkness that came creeping over the earth. In the middle of a plain stood Jacob, all alone. Not a house was in sight, nor any man nor animal. As the night came on Jacob longed more and more for his home. Esau would not have been afraid to be here, for he loved the great sky and all the open plains and woods, but Jacob had always been busy about the tents, and he had no notion how to make a bed or go to sleep under the stars.

So he pulled a flat stone out to a level piece of ground and, laying his tired head upon it, he fell asleep.

When God promises to bless a man He finds a way to do it when the man needs Him most. Jacob dreamed that he saw God's angels going up and down a ladder. Its foot was set right by his stony pillow and climbed far up through the dark blue sky among the stars to where a brighter light shone, so that he knew that Heaven was there, and God was very near.

He heard God's voice saying, "I am the Lord God, the God of Abraham, and of your Father Isaac, and I will be your God. This land that you are lying on I will give to you and your children forever. They shall be a great race, and through them there shall be a way for all the nations of the earth to be made happy."

As soon as he awoke from the dream Jacob knelt down there and thanked God for making him remember that He was not far away, even in that strange and awful place.

Then Jacob saw around him a great many such stones as he had used for a pillow that night. He gathered them into a pile and built of them an altar to remind him that God had been there. He called that spot Bethel—which means the "house of God," and so it is called to this day.

Many times you have sung in church or school that old story of Jacob's journey—

“Though, like a wanderer,
The sun gone down,
Darkness be over me,
My rest a stone,
Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my God, to Thee!”

* * * * *

Far off across a hot and dusty plain Jacob saw a group of tall palm trees, and he hurried his tired feet, for that meant that a well or spring was there, where he might rest and be refreshed. He was now many miles from Bethel and very tired of wandering.

As he came nearer he saw great flocks of sheep standing about the well, and men and women drawing water from it for the sheep to drink. Among them stood one woman more beautiful than anyone Jacob had ever seen. He helped the servants with their work for a few minutes.

“What country is this?” he asked them. And they told him it was Haran.

“Then this land and these sheep belong to Laban, my uncle?” he asked joyfully.

“Yes, and we are his servants. Over there”—they pointed to the beautiful girl—“is Rachel, one of Laban’s daughters.”

Then Jacob went gladly to her, told her that he was Isaac’s son, and kissed her solemnly. Then he sat down and began to cry because he was so happy, to have come to his own people and to have found Rachel whom he loved from the minute he saw her.

They went back to Laban’s house together, where Jacob had a hearty welcome.

Laban offered him a home, and in exchange for this Jacob was to work for him. After a certain number of years Rachel was to become his wife.

Jacob spent about twenty years in Laban's home, and then he wished to return to his own people. So Laban gave him a good share of the sheep and cows and promised to let him go. But Jacob took his share and hurriedly slipped away lest his uncle would not be true to his word. Rachel stole some of her father's little idols that he had taught her to pray to instead of God. Jacob had been having a good time in Laban's house and had been so anxious about getting rich that he had not lived very much like one of God's children. He did not seem to remember to tell Rachel anything about the God he had found at Bethel

As they went on in their journey and drew near home Jacob began to be afraid to come back and meet his brother Esau from whom he had run away. So he divided his flocks and sent some of his servants ahead with them as a present for Esau.

But Esau was glad that he had returned and no longer wished to kill him. He came out a day's journey to meet him, and when he saw him threw his arms around him and kissed him.

They camped that night near a brook. All the

way home Jacob had been remembering things that had been put away on high forgotten shelves in his mind, and had grown very dusty. It troubled him to think about the promise he had made at Bethel that he would follow God all his life, and that now for twenty years he had not followed him at all. Tonight he sent over ahead of him all his family and servants.

As he walked along thinking hard he came face to face with a man that he had not seen before. He had thought he was alone, and at once took this man for an enemy. Without saying a word he began to fight. The other caught him in a strong grip. They wrestled for a long time there by the river, but Jacob, although he was a strong man, could not put this stranger down.

Presently the stranger touched Jacob's thigh and one of the muscles shrank—and the stranger spoke for the first time.

“What is your name?”

“Jacob.”

“Your name shall after this be ‘Israel,’ which means ‘Prince of God,’ for you shall be like a prince with men and with God Who is your King.”

The stranger would not tell his name and was gone, but Jacob knew that he had met God there.

VIII

THE BOY JOSEPH

JACOB had twelve splendid sons. All their names are well remembered to this day because after each of them is named one of the great tribes of the children of Israel, whom we call Jews today. There were Reuben and Simeon and Dan and Gad and Naphtali, whose children's children and their children's children have come to be, just as God promised, more than the grains of sand on the seashore, or stars in the sky in numbers.

There was little Benjamin, the youngest of all, who became later the father of a great race of people, because from his family came the Joseph who married Mary, the mother of Jesus. Was it not strange that when the boy Judah was born he was given this name, which means "The Lord be praised!" He was the only one of the brothers whose name meant a blessing, and his father said of him that some day there should be among Judah's people a "Lion" who should be stronger than the others and should be a way to save them all.

And yet with all these wonderful words about him not even Judah's great-grandchildren ever lived to see



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JOSEPH

"Then Joseph looked up and saw his brothers coming, with a troop of strange men."



Jesus on earth. For this time was nearly as many hundred years before His coming as we are living after Him.

Now there was one more boy in Jacob's family whom he loved even better than the others. He was thoughtful as his father had been when he was a boy, and could understand very hard things. And yet there was no tribe named after Joseph, for a strange thing happened to him when he was only a boy.

One day when his brothers were in the fields of Dothan tending their father's sheep, Jacob sent Joseph to go out and help them. So he started out wearing the bright coat of many colors which his father had made for him because he loved him so much.

As Joseph came near to Dothan, looking for his brothers, he saw that they seemed to be acting strangely. They had beckoned to each other and drawn together in a little group, talking angrily and pointing at him. He shaded his eyes with his hand and looked more closely to be sure.

For some time they had been angry at him ever since the time he had told them about his dreams. They did not like to think that they would ever have to bow down to him, for in one dream he had seen twelve stars and the sun and the moon circle around and bow down before one star. And another time he had dreamed

that they were all out in the fields tying wheat up into bundles, and suddenly all the other bundles had fallen down on the ground before the one he had made.

Of course these things had made his brothers dislike him and call him "the dreamer!" and make a great deal of fun of him.

As he stood watching them in surprise, the coat of many colors looked very gay in the sunshine and made them angry.

"Let's kill him," muttered one of the boys, with a frown.

"Yes, let us take that coat home to our father and say that a wild animal had killed him and we found his coat all covered with blood."

But Reuben the oldest brother would not let them do this.

"No," he said, "we can throw him into this old well that no one uses, and he will never find the way home again from a wild place like this."

So they agreed on this. Reuben's plan was to come back to the well—which had no water in it—and take Joseph safely home.

As Joseph walked on toward his brothers, troubled at their strange actions, they came to meet him, and bound him, throwing him into the pit as they planned.

Then they went back to their lunch. A troop of men and camels came near, and told the brothers that they were on their way down to Egypt to sell their packs of spices.

The boys thought it would be a fine plan to send Joseph with these men, for then they would surely be rid of him forever. Now Reuben was off in a distant pasture and did not hear this talk. When he came back to the pit, to his horror he found that Joseph was not there. Then he heard the story of how the boys had sold him to these strangers who had given them twenty pieces of silver money to pay for him.

They all went back to Jacob with the sad story of how Joseph had been killed by a bear or lion in a wild place. Jacob's heart was broken and no one could comfort him because he had lost his dearest son.

In the meantime Joseph was traveling in a strange new country. The people had dark skins, and wore rich clothes and many gold rings and chains. They prayed to the sun and moon and often to a cow, which they thought was a god. They made pictures and images of a cow in gold and knelt down before them to ask them to make them well, or to help them in a journey or a war. They had never heard of the Heavenly Father whom Joseph's people called Jehovah.

As they rode through Egypt Joseph saw on either side of the road many tall cornfields and fruit trees full of fruit, and he knew that he had come into a rich country.

One of the soldiers of the king's guard, Potiphar the captain, bought him from the men he had come with. Potiphar was a great man and very rich, but he grew to like and trust Joseph so much that he put him in charge of all that he had, his house and farm and cattle.

One night the king—they called him Pharaoh in that country—dreamed two dreams that troubled him, so that he wished to know what they meant, but none of his wise men could tell him.

So they called for Joseph who had explained a dream for the king's baker and the butler—and his words had come true.

Pharaoh had dreamed that he saw seven fat cows standing on the river bank, and that seven very thin cows came and ate them up and were no fatter than before. Again he dreamed that he saw seven good ears of corn on a stalk and seven poor ears had eaten up the good ones, just as the cows had done.

Joseph when he heard this knew exactly what it meant, for God put it in his heart to understand.

He spoke boldly to the king:

“O Pharaoh, these seven fat cows which you saw are the seven years when there shall be more than enough for everyone to eat and the country shall be very rich. But after these years there are coming seven years of famine when the corn and wheat will not grow well and cattle will die. And the dream about the wheat means the same, that the years of famine shall more than use up all that is saved in the rich years.”

The king was troubled when he heard this, and Joseph said to him:

“A very wise man ought to be chosen to do this work for the king. He should save one-fifth part of all that grows in Egypt during these good years, so that the people may have enough when nothing grows.”

Pharaoh thought to himself, “Where can I find a man who is wise enough to know how to make the people do this, and to know how much to save?”

Suddenly he said,

“Joseph, if you were wise enough to know what this dream meant, then you must be the only man who can do this for me. I will make you second in all Egypt next in rank to me, as though you were my son.”

And he took a ring from his own finger and put it on Joseph, to show that he meant to make him greater than anyone in the country except the king.

IX

JOSEPH, THE GOVERNOR OF EGYPT

WHEN the days of plenty were over the people were sick and dying in all the countries around Egypt because they had no food. Only in Egypt they had plenty, because Joseph had stored up for them more than could be counted.

Down in Canaan there was a big family who had nothing left. They decided to go up to Egypt with sacks and buy all they could. Their father did not go, for he was very old, nor their youngest brother.

When these ten men came to Egypt and told what they had come for, they were taken to Joseph, the governor, who attended to all such things.

When he saw them he knew that they were his own brothers, but they did not recognize him, so he said,

“No, I cannot let you have any corn unless I am sure that you are not spies.”

“Of course we are not spies,” they answered him, “we are all sons of one man in Canaan.”

Joseph led them to talking still further about their home, for he wished to know if his father was alive.

“If you cannot bring your youngest brother with you I cannot believe you are true men and not spies.”

So they left Simeon in Egypt so that they would surely come back again, and went to bring Benjamin. Joseph had ordered their sacks filled full of corn, and would not keep any money to pay for it, but had the servant put it back into the top of each man's sack.

But Jacob would not let Benjamin go. Finally, when the corn was all gone and everyone was suffering, Judah went to his father and begged again that they might take Benjamin down to Egypt with them, promising to bring him back safely.

This time when they came they were invited to dinner at the governor's house. They were afraid at this, thinking that that money which Joseph had had returned to them was now going to be a proof against them that they were not good men.

All through the dinner they could not understand Joseph's kindness, which was especially great to Benjamin. He kept sending very nice dishes of food to him, but Joseph was so glad and excited to see all his brothers again that he could scarcely eat his own dinner.

When the men left Joseph gave orders again that the money was to be put back into the sacks which were full of corn.

“And put my silver cup in the sack of the youngest brother.”

Then, when the brothers had been gone just a little while, Joseph sent a servant running after them, saying that one of them had stolen Joseph's silver cup. The one who had it in his sack was to be arrested and brought back to be a slave to Joseph. The others might go home. This was Joseph's trick, of course, to keep Benjamin living in Egypt with him.

None of the brothers expected that the cup would be found with them, for they knew they had not stolen it. When it was brought out of Benjamin's sack they were all frightened, for they could not go home to their father without Benjamin.

So they hurried back to Joseph, and Judah pleaded hard with Joseph to show him how it must kill their old father if he could not see his son Benjamin again.

When he had finished, Joseph sent all the servants away, and said:

“I am Joseph—is my father still alive?”

They looked at him in silence. Some of them were afraid lest Joseph would kill them for what they had done to him. Some could not believe it was their brother.

But Benjamin knew him, and he put his arms

around him, and cried for all the long years they had been apart.

When Pharaoh heard about it he was pleased, and told them to take wagons and anything else they needed, and bring up from Canaan their father and all their wives and children to live in Egypt. The brothers were full of wonder at Joseph that he was not angry at them, but he only said,

“Oh, it was not you that sent me down here, but God. He put me here and is showing me how to take care of these people, and now He has sent you to me, too, so that I may help you. So go quickly and bring them all to live near me here in the land of Goshen.”

Jacob could hardly believe it when he heard that Joseph was alive, and he came with joy to see him. He gave Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's two boys, his blessing before he died, and two of the tribes of Isreal are named for these two boys.

X

THE BABY IN A BOAT

MANY years passed by, and a very different sight was to be seen in Egypt from that of Joseph's time. His brothers' families had settled all the land of Goshen—the eastern part of Egypt.

Then a different king came to rule over the country, one who did not love Joseph's people, and the welcome visitors had become servants. Joseph had died, and there was no one to speak well for them.

This new Pharaoh hated them because they were a strong, fine people, always rich. There were now many hundreds of them, and the Egyptians were afraid that soon the Israelites might go to war against them.

So they forced them to make bricks. Pharaoh had them build him two great cities and many monuments.

Still the hard work did not kill them or make them weak, but only stronger. Their children all lived to grow up, so that the Egyptians got together to talk about what they could do, for they were afraid there might soon be more Israelites than Egyptians in the land.

Then Pharaoh sent out an order to kill all the boys when they were babies so that they could not grow up to fight. But the servants did not always obey.

This was the case in a house where the father and mother both belonged to the family of Levi, which was now very large. This father and mother had a little son born to them, which they decided to hide so that he would not be killed.

When he grew too big a baby to be hidden longer in the house, the mother made carefully a tiny covered boat of the long rushes that grew by the river. Then she covered all the little cracks and holes with thick mud and pitch which would not let the water through.

Then she laid the baby in it, and put it afloat among the plants that grew at the edge of the water. The baby's sister hid in the bushes and watched to see that nothing happened to him.

Down the stone steps came a beautiful princess followed by her ladies-in-waiting. She was coming to this quiet place to bathe in the river.

Suddenly she saw the strange little boat, and sent one of her maids to see what it could possibly be.

When they opened it before her, the baby began to cry, and she was sorry for it. She saw that it was one of the Israelite children, and she knew her father

had given the order to kill them. But she was pleased with this one and thought she would take it for her own.

The little sister stepped out and said, "Shall I call a Hebrew nurse to take care of the baby?"

"Yes, go," said Pharaoh's daughter.

So the baby Moses was taken by his own mother and cared for until he was old enough to go to the palace.

Moses grew up at the palace, waited upon like a king's son. One day he was out walking near the cities that the Israelites were building, and he saw how unfair and cruel the masters were to his own people.

As he stood and looked he saw one of the Egyptians strike an Israelite. He looked around him a minute, then rushed upon the Egyptian, killed him, and hid his body in the sand.

The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He tried to make peace between them, but they were angry, and one said:

"Do you want to kill me the way you did that Egyptian yesterday?" Then Moses knew that the thing he had done was known to everybody, and he ran away far into the land of Midian.

Moses thought he was far away from any troubles about right and wrong, that he need worry no longer

about his people. He led a peaceful life in the desert, shut away from hearing of the cruelty of the Egyptians.

He had come to live with a kind old priest named Jethro. He married the priest's daughter and took care of Jethro's sheep, driving them about to good pastures.

One day he had led his sheep near a mountain called Horeb. Suddenly he noticed a strange bush on the mountain that seemed to be on fire, but no burning branch fell off, and, though he watched it for a long time, it did not burn up.

He came near, and still the bright beautiful flames played about; then there came a voice calling his name:

"Moses, come no nearer. Take off your shoes, for this is a holy place where you are standing."

Then God explained to Moses that he was to be the one to save the Israelites from the cruelty of the Egyptians.

But Moses did not want to go. He told God a great many reasons why he was not the kind of man God needed.

But God said, "Go, Moses, and I will be with you. That is enough."

Then Moses found another reason why he was not fit.

“They will not believe a word I say. They will say, ‘What is the name of this God who sends you?’ ”

Then in great, wonderful words God told Moses His name, “Jehovah,” which word of the Hebrew language means “I Am.”

“Go tell my people, Moses, that I Am hath sent you.”

This name, which reminded him that God could do everything and was greater than any earthly king, ought to have made Moses know that there was nothing for him to be afraid of in Egypt or wherever God sent him.

But still Moses waited, asking God for some sign that would show everybody that the Lord had truly talked with him.

So God told him to throw down the staff he was carrying. When it touched the ground it became a wriggling snake.

“Now put out your hand and pick it up, Moses,” and Moses took hold of its tail and it became only a stick again.

Then he was told to put his hand inside the fold of his robe at the neck. When he drew it out it was snow-white, as men look when they have that awful sickness called leprosy.

God told him to put it in again, and this time he found it rosy and well again.

Moses by this time understood a little better what God meant when he promised to go with him back to the country where everyone hated him. He was going to make him strong where he was now weak, and as wise as he was slow and stupid now.

And yet Moses had one more excuse to bring to the Lord.

“Surely you know, Lord, that I am slow of speech—that I cannot talk in public because my tongue stammers and will not make the words fast enough. How could such a man lead those thousands of people and speak before kings?”

He found that God had prepared his way here, too; for Aaron, his brother, who talked well and easily, was to be sent with Moses, to say whatever Moses should tell him.

So, though he still did not want to very much, Moses started out for Egypt.

XI

GOD'S POWER SHOWN TO PHARAOH

JUST as Moses had feared, the Israelites would hardly believe God's great plan for them.

When Moses went to speak to Pharaoh, he asked him if he might take the Israelites a three days' journey out into the wild places to the east of them, so that they might sacrifice to their God. But Pharaoh would not consider the plan. He grew very angry that they wished to go.

"Have they not enough work to do," he cried, "that they think of taking a vacation! Tell their overseers to give them more work. Let them find the straw for making the bricks and still make as many every day as they did before!"

This new law made life twice as hard for the Israelites and they began to grumble at Moses and to say that he had not come to help, but to hurt, them. So both the Egyptians and the Hebrews hated him.

Moses took his troubles to God.

"Now, Moses, you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh, for he will not only let them go, but he will

drive them out. I am the Lord, Jehovah. Abraham and Isaac knew Me as God Almighty, but they did not know the great strength of Jehovah. Now I have made a promise to them to give them the beautiful land of Canaan, and I will do it."

When Moses heard this promise again he hurried to remind the Israelites of it. But they were so tired with their heavy work that they were angry with Moses and would not listen.

Then he went to Pharaoh, asking him again to let the people go. This time he showed him the wonderful rod which turned into a snake. By some trick the magicians of the king's court appeared to turn their rods to snakes also, but Moses' snake ate them all up, and it became a rod again.

Still Pharaoh refused, so, as God had told him to, Moses lifted his rod and struck the water of the river, where Pharaoh and all his servants could see. Suddenly between the rich beautiful green of its banks the Nile river flowed along a heavy dark red stream of blood.

Of course no one could drink of such water, and the fish that had lived in the river died.

Pharaoh's magicians then tried their tricks and managed to make it look as though they had done

the same. When the king saw this, he did not soften his heart toward Moses and allow the people to go, but was instead angry at him, for there was no water to drink anywhere in the country for a week.

Then God said to Moses:

“Go and tell Pharaoh that if he will not let the Israelites go I will send frogs into the land everywhere. They shall go into the houses, into the beds and the ovens and the food that the cooks are preparing.”

But Pharaoh would not give up. So, of course, the frogs came by the hundreds and thousands. Then the king called for Moses and Aaron:

“Beg of the Lord your God, I pray you, that the frogs may be taken away from here, and tomorrow the people may go away to sacrifice.”

Pharaoh made this promise, but as soon as the frogs were gone he made his heart hard again, and he would not let them go.

So God had to send him another trouble. Moses stretched out his rod, and all the little particles of dust became lice, crawling about on everything and everybody.

Then came flies, great swarms of them, in all the houses, annoying all the people. Only in Goshen—that part where the Israelites lived—there were no flies.

Pharaoh gave in and said that the people might go, but this promise only lasted until the flies and lice were gone.

So things went on. God would send a terrible plague to the people, Pharaoh would be willing to have the Israelites go, as long as he was suffering. As soon as it was taken away, however, he refused again to let them go.

There was a terrible disease which killed many of the cattle; there was a disease of boils sent to the people; then a thunder and hail storm which destroyed the grain in the fields; then the insect which the Egyptians dreaded most, an army of locusts which ate every tree or plant in their way; and after that a great darkness through all the land except in Goshen.

After all these things Moses went down to Goshen and gathered his people together and said to them:

“This is God’s word to you. Now the time has come for you to escape, for God is going to send death as a last punishment unto Egypt. The oldest son of every Egyptian house shall die. But those in the Israelites’ houses shall live, for they shall have God’s sign over their doors.

“This is the way for you to put it there. Every family shall kill a lamb, which is to be eaten as a solemn

feast on a certain night. The blood from this lamb you must sprinkle over your door, so that the Death Angel shall see the mark and pass over that house.

“That night there will be great sorrow in Egypt. In your houses each family will be eating the feast, with their goods packed, themselves all dressed for going on the long journey out of Egypt.”

So the Israelites this time believed Moses and did as they were told. God kept His promise and sent the Death Angel into Egypt, but he passed over the Israelites' homes, and they slipped quietly out of Egypt that night. The Jews celebrate that night from that day to this and it is called the Passover.

XII

OUT OF EGYPT

A GREAT army of hundreds of thousands of people, walking, riding in wagons, driving with them cows or sheep, carrying heavy bags over their shoulders—so went the Israelites, men, women and children, until every house in Goshen was silent and empty.

In the king's court, guards came to tell that these people were going, but there was a great sound of weeping and wailing there. The oldest son of Pharaoh was dead, and it was soon known that a son from every house had died that night.

When word came that the slave-people who had done all their work for them had actually gone, the king and soldiers rose up in anger and vowed to find these people who were making all this trouble by means of their God. They would kill some of them, and bring back the rest to wait upon them again.

So it was not long before the Israelites saw this great army coming toward them. On one side was the Red Sea, on the other came Pharaoh and all his chosen fighters, and the Israelites cried out to Moses:

“Did you think there were not enough graves in Egypt that you have brought us out here to die?”

But Moses said:

“Wait, just stand still and see how God will save you. He will fight for you, you need only to be quiet.”

Then the great pillar of cloud which was God’s angel moved from His place in front of them, and stood between them and the advancing army all night, so that the Egyptians could not see, but it was a bright light to the Israelites.

According to God’s command Moses put out his rod over the sea, and a strong east wind blowing steadily all night piled the waters up into a huge wall on each side of a dry smooth path. The Israelites marched on through between the walls of water, and they sang a mighty thanksgiving song when they reached the other side, for when the Egyptians tried to follow the waters closed over their heads and swallowed them up.

Their song is printed in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus (the book which tells the story of their going out):

“I will sing unto the Lord,
For He hath triumphed gloriously:
The horse and his rider
Hath He thrown into the sea.”

XIII

THE GOLDEN CALF

SAFELY out of the land of their troubles, with God always present with them in the pillar of fire and cloud, it would have seemed that the Israelites would march straight through the desert into the land of Canaan which God had promised them would be so rich that they called it "flowing with milk and honey."

But they acted like naughty little children. Every time anything happened to annoy them, instead of trusting God to make it right, they began to be cross and say they were sorry they ever left Egypt. Often their complaining made it necessary for them to have to go a much longer way than they would have otherwise.

Whenever they grew angry and behaved badly God saw that they were not ready to go into the Promised Land, and, like a really kind father, He had to send them some punishment to teach them to obey and trust Him.

Once when they came to a camp, tired and thirsty with the hot traveling, they found that the water in

the stream was so bitter that they could not drink it. Without thinking of God they began to complain to Moses. God had a cure for the bitterness and let Moses make the water sweet for them, but the next time that something unpleasant happened they did not remember to speak to God about it.

When they grew tired of the poor food they could find in the wilderness, God sent them a beautiful rain of little white cakes that came like frost on the ground every morning except Sunday. Enough always fell the day before so that they could save the Sunday portion. Then later He sent them flocks of birds so that they might have meat when they were tired of "Manna," as they called the cakes.

Even the time when God came nearest to them they forgot Him and went to play instead of waiting to hear what He had to say to them. This was the time when God called Moses up into the cloud-covered Mount Sinai to give him the laws for the people, written upon tables of stone by God's own finger.

The people had been told to wait at the foot of the mountain while God talked to Moses. But instead of a quiet, solemn meeting, they brought all their rings and gold chains to Aaron, and he made for them a golden calf such as they had seen the people pray to in

Egypt. They sang and danced and feasted and said, "This calf is the god that brought us out of Egypt!"

The first law God had made for them was:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not bow down to them or serve them."

All the time that they were breaking this law by making a calf their god, their Heavenly Father was giving Moses greater promises for these people than ever before. He looked down and saw them praying to this calf and forgetting Him.

Moses, coming down from the mountains full of the memory of God's words, saw this awful thing and in his anger threw down the tables of stone and broke them. He ground to powder the golden calf, mixed it with water, and made the people drink it.

Then he went to speak to God again, and was given the laws once more—but this time not written down by God's finger—and he was told exactly how to make a place where the people might come to worship God. It was to have a rough stone altar for the sacrifices and a very sacred place curtained off where God would come to live among His people. But no one might ever go in there but the High Priest once a year. For there was the ark of the Lord where they kept the Tables of the Law and where God's Presence stayed.

When Moses went this time to talk with the Lord the people stood each one at his own tent door, ashamed. After this they learned to worship in their "tabernacle"—this tent church which was made so that it could be carried with them in their wanderings.

It was made of the most beautiful things the people had, as carefully worked and put together as they could do. Now they brought their gold and silver as gifts to God and no longer to make strange idols.

XIV

A CLUSTER OF GRAPES

WHEN after many years the people of Israel at last came to the borders of the Promised Land, they sent over into the country twelve men as spies to see what sort of land it was and how strong were the people. For God had told them they must kill the people who now lived there, so that they would not become like these heathen, and grow into the habit of worshiping their gods instead of Jehovah.

There was a great stir among the people when Caleb and Joshua and the other spies came back, for they had brought home with them an immense bunch of grapes, so large that it had to be hung on a stick and carried across the shoulders of two men.

Then there was silence in the great congregation to hear more about this rich country. But when they heard that there were great walled-in cities full of strong fighting men, they were afraid. All that night the sound of crying came from every tent.

“Alas, we can never go into that land and conquer

those people! They are strong and we are weak. We shall all be killed. We might have stayed in Egypt!”

Then Caleb and Joshua stood up, full of the Spirit of the Lord, and said:

“This is truly a good land, given us by the Lord. Let us go up at once and take it. If God means what He has promised, then surely He will defend us—if we only do not turn against Him.”

But the people said, “Let us select a captain of our own and turn around and go back to Egypt!”

Then God’s word came to Moses:

“They have utterly disobeyed me again, and have not trusted Me at all! For this reason they must turn about and wander through the wilderness for forty years longer, because they are not strong enough to take this land if they have not yet learned to believe in Me. No one of those men who was afraid shall ever see the Promised Land. But they shall die in the wilderness. Their children and my two servants Caleb and Joshua shall come into Canaan, and live there and enjoy it!”

So they turned back and spent forty years learning the lesson that they were never strong without God, but that no one could conquer them if He were with them.

Once more they were tested this same way. Poison-

ous snakes had come into the camp, biting many of the people, making them very sick. God told Moses to make a snake out of brass and lift it up high upon a pole. Everyone who was willing to look to that was cured. If they did not believe enough in God's power to be willing to look up and be saved, then they must die.

Jesus himself told this story again when He came to earth, and He showed the people how this was a picture of what He had done. He put on Himself a body like ours that can do wrong and was lifted up upon a cross, so that anyone who was willing to look to Him and trust in Him could be saved, and need not die of the snake-bite of sin which was in our blood since the time when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden.

XV

A CITY THROWN DOWN BY MUSIC

WHEN the forty years of punishment were over the Israelites came again near to the borders of the Promised Land. They had learned more about trusting their God than their fathers had known when they were afraid to go into Canaan. They were now ready for whatever should come.

Joshua, who had been the young spy sent into Canaan forty years ago, was now to be their leader, for Moses had died.

God had now begun to speak to Joshua:

And He said: "As I was with Moses so I will be with you, Joshua. I will never fail you. Only you must be strong and very courageous, and do not turn away from the things you have learned about trusting and obeying God. I will be with you all your life wherever you go."

So, with these words to give him strength, Joshua led the people into the new land. The women and children and the tents and goods of the people were to

stay on the wilderness side of Jordan until the fighting men should have conquered the land and made it safe.

As they started out on their long journey of battles God gave them an amazing sign that He was going to fight with them.

As they brought the ark of the Lord down to the edge of the Jordan River the waters rose up to make a dry path for the priests who carried it, just as the waters of the Red Sea had done when the people came out of Egypt. This wonder was heard of throughout the whole land, and many of the heathen people were afraid because of the God of these strangers who were coming in.

Then the priests and the fighting men started toward Jericho. Its gates were all shut and no one was allowed to go in or out, on account of the strange army moving toward it.

The first morning, as the people of Jericho looked out, they saw a strange sight. First, seven priests blowing trumpets, then a box carefully carried by more priests, then forty thousand fighting men—solemnly marching around the city wall. There was great excitement inside the city, for this was not the way that a battle was usually begun. When they had gone all the way around the city they went quietly back to their

camp and stayed all day. Exactly the same thing happened early in the morning next day.

When this had gone on for six days, and no fighting done, the people inside the city settled down, thinking that either the army was crazy or trying to show off.

But the seventh morning Joshua's men did a little differently. They marched around the city seven times, and the seventh time there came a very long blast from the trumpets, and Joshua said to his men:

“Shout, for God has given you this city!”

The forty thousand men shouted and the trumpets blew. Suddenly with a mighty crash the walls of Jericho fell down, and the army of Israel marched in. According to God's orders they utterly destroyed it, and all of the people, except one household who had helped the spies whom Joshua sent.

This was the first of many victories which God gave to Joshua and the army of Israel. They did not always win their battles, for sometimes they disobeyed Him and thought they knew best what to do. Then He did not help them. But if they came back to trusting everything to Him He would turn their defeats into victory in wonderful ways. Once He made the sun and moon stand still at Joshua's word, so that the day might be a little longer and the Israelites might win.

XVI

A FIGHT WITH LAMPS, PITCHERS, AND TRUMPETS

WHEN the land of Canaan was finally conquered and divided among the twelve tribes, they settled down and lived in peace for about forty years.

Then they began to take up the idols of the people around them, thinking that they had grown beyond the old worship of only one God. They set up altars to Baal under the trees and in high places, and it became more fashionable to worship there than to build altars to Jehovah.

Then they began to hear stories about a fierce people to the south of them—the Midianites—coming up to make war upon them. Of course they knew that Baal could not help in a case like this, so they cried to the Lord to help them.

It was springtime and the Midianites came up and destroyed all their crops and stole their cattle, and were so many in number that the Israelites ran away into caves to hide from them.

Up in Manasseh, a strong young man, named

Gideon, was threshing out wheat, hiding it carefully from the enemy. A stranger came and said to him:

“God is with you, Gideon, you are to save Israel from these Midianites.”

“But how can I do that?” asked Gideon. “I am just one of the sons in a poor family.”

“Surely God will be with you, and you shall do it!”

Then Gideon asked the stranger for a sign that would show this was a message from God. And he brought out food for the stranger and set it on a rock. The man struck the rock with his staff and fire came up and burnt all the food that Gideon put there. Then he knew that this was an angel from God.

That very night God told Gideon that he must tear down the altar of Baal which stood in his father's grove and build there an altar to Jehovah and burn a sacrifice upon it. So Gideon did this, but he had to work at night so that no one would see and stop him.

Early in the morning some men of the city came in angrily and said to Joash, Gideon's father:

“Bring out your son, we will kill him! He has cut down the altar to Baal!”

But Joash said to them, “Why should you plead for Baal? If he is really a god, will he not save himself?”

Then Gideon went out and blew a trumpet, and gathered together all the men of the neighboring tribes to battle, about thirty-two thousand, to go up together to fight against the Midianites.

But God said to Gideon, "That is too big an army. Go and send back all that are afraid."

Twenty-two thousand men said they were afraid and went back home. But still God said there were too many.

So Gideon took the ten thousand that were left down to the river side to drink. Some of them got down on their knees and leaned over to drink. These were sent home, for a real soldier will not waste that much time when he is going to battle. But three hundred of them passed this test, for each of these men brought up the water in his hand, and was ready to run ahead immediately.

Then Gideon gave to each of these three hundred a pitcher and a lamp and a trumpet. With these strange weapons they started bravely toward the camp of the Midianites.

Toward nightfall Gideon and a servant crept quietly up to the camp and overheard what was being said in one of the tents.

One man said, "Last night I dreamed a barley

cake rolled down the hill and knocked a tent down flat."

The other answered, "Do you know that must mean those Israelites up yonder on the hill? They must be going to conquer us."

Gideon and his servant hurried back to tell this, and he started his men out with their trumpets, lamps and pitchers.

In the middle of the night there suddenly appeared lights all around the Midianites camp, trumpets blew, and all the three hundred pitchers were broken at once. Then great shouts—"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

The sudden noise and light made the enemy think that there was a great host come into their camp. They rushed about, killing one another in their excitement and running away from the Israelites.

So there was great victory again for God's people. They made Gideon their captain as long as he lived.

XVII

A VOICE IN THE NIGHT

AS LONG as the Israelites had much fighting to do, they appointed a captain for their armies, and had no other ruler. After Gideon came Jephthah, then Samson, the man of great strength and size. These captains of the army would settle disputes which might arise between the tribes, and so came to be called judges.

After the time of Samson there was born in the tribe of Ephraim a little boy. His father, Elkanah, and his mother, Hannah, were both people who loved God. They came regularly to the place of worship in Shiloh.

One day when their little boy Samuel was old enough to leave his home they brought him up to Shiloh with them, and at the solemn meeting there they gave him to God. They left him there to live in the temple to grow up learning to obey God, so that some day he might serve Him in whatever way God called him.

Samuel was a good boy and old Eli the priest of the temple grew to love him as if he were his own

son. Eli had two sons of his own, but they were not like Samuel. Eli had not been a good father to them, for he had not punished them enough when they were little. Now they had grown into selfish men, who served as priests in the temple, but continually made fun of the sacred things. They went with people that were bad, and often Eli found them drunken with wine.

The good people of Israel felt very sorry that Hophni and Phineas should be allowed to serve in the temple, but none of them dared say anything to Eli.

One night when the lights were dim in the temple, and the Levites' evening hymn was over, Eli was praying alone before the altar. Little Samuel had gone to bed, but he heard a voice calling, "Samuel, Samuel!"

He listened a minute, then slipped out on to the bare stone floor and came into the great dim temple room.

"My father, here I am. I heard you call!" Eli looked surprised, for he had not called, and said:

"No, I did not call. Go lie down again."

Samuel had hardly gotten into his bed again, when he heard the voice, echoing through the empty rooms. "Samuel, Samuel!"

He came and stood by Eli again:

"My father here am I, you called me."

“No, my son,” answered Eli, “I did not call.”

Slowly Samuel went to his bed again, not understanding why Eli had said he did not call.

When the call came the third time Samuel went to Eli, determined to find out:

“My father, truly you called me this time.”

Eli smiled as he looked at the boy, for he began to understand that it was God calling, and he said to him:

“Go lie down again, and if He calls, answer Him, ‘Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.’ ”

So Samuel listened, and when God’s call came again, he answered as he had been told, and God gave him a message to take to Eli. Samuel lay still until morning.

As he was going about his morning duties, opening the doors of the temple, Eli called him and asked what the Lord’s message had been. Samuel bravely told him all of it:

“God says that your family is judged by Him and condemned and no sacrifice can ever make clean the wickedness of your two sons, or your own sin that you did not stop them from doing such things.”

Not long after this Hophni and Phineas were killed in battle. The ark of the Lord too was stolen by the enemy. That meant that God’s presence was taken

away from Israel. Eli knew that these things had come because he had done wrong, and in his shame and sorrow he fell down dead.

But Samuel grew up in the knowledge of God and judged Israel until he was an old man.

During Samuel's life as judge over Israel there were constant wars between the Israelites and the Philistines. It was these people who had taken the ark of the Lord just before Eli's death. They had not been able to keep it; disease and death came upon the people, and all their false gods fell down before it and broke. When the ark was returned, the Israelites said solemnly to God that they were sorry for their wickedness, and would no more worship false gods.

As Samuel grew old they came to him and asked him to select a king for them. All the nations around them had kings, and they wished to have one.

So Samuel anointed with oil a young man named Saul, tall and strong and a good fighter. Samuel tried to teach him the way of the Lord, but Saul after a little while went his own way. Although he still reigned for many years, Samuel told him that God had chosen someone else to take his place, and that because he had not obeyed, the kingdom might not pass on to Saul's son, but must go to another.

XVIII

DAVID

THERE was a great stir and excitement in the little town of Bethlehem that was usually so quiet. A messenger came down the street calling, "Hearken, all ye people, hearken!" When he stood in the market-place the townspeople ran down the narrow streets or opened their windows to hear the great news, and all the children gathered round him. In a clear voice he spoke:

"Be it known to you this day that Samuel, wise Judge of Israel, will come to visit Bethlehem. Prepare ye then to meet him!"

As the people cheered with joy the messenger slipped away. Then they looked at one another and forgot their joy in fear, for Samuel often came with words of rebuke for those who had sinned. They all began to think of what their lives had been, and they were afraid, for everyone remembered something he had done that was not quite right in the eyes of the Lord, and it was known that Jehovah spoke through the lips of Samuel. So they all went home to make ready

for his coming, wondering who would have the honor of having him to dinner and who might lodge him over night. They prepared their best clothes and made their houses as beautiful as they might and tried to live in the way of God.

Now there was one house in the village, the house of Jesse, where it was supposed by all the people that Samuel would lodge. Jesse had eight fine sons, some of them old enough to be in the army if there should be a war. They were handsome and all very tall, except David, the youngest, whose duty it was to tend the sheep on the hills outside the village. David was still only a boy, but he hoped to grow like his brothers, especially Eliab, the oldest, who was the tallest man in all the country round. It was thought that Eliab might even be nearly the height of Saul the King of their country Israel, who stood head and shoulders above most men.

At last the great day came when Samuel was brought down the main street of the village in a car carried by four men. The children watched him eagerly as he directed his men to go on to the house of Jesse. He was an old man with hair and beard like snow, but his eyes were very bright, and he smiled at the children in a way that they remembered. They



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DAVID BEFORE KING SAUL

"David sang: 'The Lord is my shepherd.'"



followed gladly when they were invited to come with all the people to look into the courtyard where Jesse stood among his sons. The mother was there and bowed before the Judge who honored them by his coming. But David was not there. Of course someone must tend the sheep, so he had risen at sunrise, and gone out a mile or two to the pasture. He was now doing his best to forget the excitement at home by trying to hit a mark on a distant tree with stones from the brook, fitted into a sling that he had made.

Meantime, Samuel, after offering an animal upon the altar as a sacrifice to God, arose and told Jesse and all the people that God needed a young man to do a certain piece of work for Him. "I have been sent here to find a man after God's own heart," he said.

So Jesse proudly brought forward Eliab, and Samuel smiled, for he was good to look upon. But he must ask God first. "No, it is not Eliab," he said after a little silence. A whisper of surprise went round among the people, for God does not look at a man's face, but upon his heart.

Jesse called his second son, Abinadab, but God said to Samuel, "Not this one." Then each one of the others came out in turn, and it was found that none of them would do.

“Are these all of your sons, Jesse? Have you no other?” asked Samuel.

“I have a boy out in the field tending sheep. But surely God has not called him. He is only a child.” But he sent someone to bring David.

The people, weary with waiting, had most of them gone home when David came into the courtyard before Samuel. His shepherd’s staff was in his hand and his face was flushed with the warm sun. As Samuel looked upon him he knew that here was the one that God had sent him to find. So he talked and prayed a little with David, and then he poured upon his head a few drops of oil which God had told him to set aside for that purpose. Then God’s Spirit came upon David and he was happier than he had ever been before. It was almost as if God talked with him face to face, he told his mother in the evening.

He did not know yet what the work would be which God had called him to do, but in the long days on the hillside where he went on watching the sheep he would often talk to God. In this way God spoke many things to his heart, and David grew to understand His way and what He wanted men to do.

Often out there he would sing old, old songs of Israel that his mother had taught him. Sometimes

he made up words of his own. The hills were green and smooth and they rounded down to the brook which wound about their feet. It talked along softly in the dark places under the willows, and then it laughed aloud in the sunshine where it ran over the stones. It seemed easy to find words to sing to God in that quiet place.

On the other side of the brook was a rock, full of a great quiet strength. Sometimes when it had not rained for a long time and the brooks were dried up the littlest lambs got very thirsty. Then out from this rock there came a cool spring slipping down. Once when this happened David wrote a song about it. He called God his Rock, for he could rest in His shadow and said that he longed for Him as one longs for water in a dry and thirsty land. His mother liked that song and often asked him to sing it. His brothers would tease him then and tell him he would never be a man, that he was now old and strong enough to fight and not to sing. These words troubled him, and he would sit and look at the dark woods in the distance and wish that he might have a chance to do something great.

One day he drove his sheep to a pasture nearer the woods than they had ever been before. Then he sat down on a stone nearby. Suddenly he heard the lambs begin to cry in a frightened way, and he saw a

big animal coming toward them to catch and eat them. He did not quite know whether it was a lion or a bear, for he had never seen either so near before. But he jumped down with a bound right on to it, praying as he ran. He pulled and tore at its hair and then caught it by the throat and quickly choked it to death before it could reach the sheep, who were scattered to this side and that, very much afraid. As he turned to find them he saw that one of the baby lambs was caught in a thick bush down a steep part of the hillside where it had fallen in trying to run away. David scrambled down as far as he could, and then with the crook of his shepherd's staff he was able to reach the lamb and pull it up to safety. He soon found the other sheep and took them to a safer pasture. But this one he carried all the way, for its little heart still beat quite fast and frightened against his arm.

As he sat down again to watch by the sheep, it came to him how God had saved him from the paw of the lion just as he had been able to save his sheep. It was as though he had reached down from heaven with the rod and staff of a shepherd and pulled him out of danger. The more he thought, the more he saw how God was his shepherd, leading him to the greenest pastures and finding quiet waters for him to drink from.

“I will sing a song,” he said aloud. “I will sing my praise to the Lord my shepherd.” But he saw that the sun was going down and there was no more time that night to put together the words of his song.

All the way home he kept thinking of the ways God leads. He did not know that just tomorrow God would bring him to a new way.

When he reached home that night he found three strangers there, men from the king’s court. They had heard of Jesse and his sons, and after the evening meal they asked David to sing. He felt half afraid of his brothers’ teasing words, but he brought his harp and sat down by his mother.

First he sang the old songs. One was the song that Miriam sang when God had brought the people out of danger. “Sing ye to the Lord,” it begins. And then he sang a prayer of Moses. Then, because his mother asked, he sang his own song of praise to God “As the hart panteth after the water brooks.”

When he had finished the men thanked him and asked his father if the boy might come with them to the palace of Saul the King.

“But what could David do in a palace, my lords? He has no manners but those he has learned from the sheep.”

“Have you not heard?” asked the oldest of the men, “Saul our King, as you know, was once a young man in whom the Spirit of the Lord lived even as in your David. He obeyed God and ruled the people wisely and was happy. But he began to think about himself, and refused to walk in God’s way. So the Spirit of the Lord went away, and an evil spirit came into the empty place where God had lived. Now Saul is always unhappy. Some days he will not eat and cannot sleep and is cross to everyone around him. He is suffering now from this evil spirit, and we want your boy to come and sing to him and perhaps quiet him.”

“Of course he may go, and I hope he will please the King and help to make him well,” answered Jesse.

So, early next morning, they started on their way, bringing gifts for the King.

When they reached Jerusalem David was very eager over all the sights of the city and almost forgot that he was going to see the King. But they hurried him on to the palace.

He wondered at the many great rooms there. In one room he was given his lunch, a beautiful feast fit for the King served by many slaves upon gold and silver dishes. There was more than enough of everything.

Then he was taken to other servants who pre-

pared him in spicy baths and silks and a rich leopard skin to be fit to enter the presence of the King. There was a great hurry everywhere and men gave orders in cross voices. David thought that he would have sung far better if he might have come fresh from the hillside. But, of course, that would never do before a king.

Then they brought him into a small room with great marble pillars and heavy silken curtains making a doorway into a larger room. The big room was dark and very still except for the quick, heavy breathing of some one there. No one dared to go in until there came the command in a loud angry voice:

“Bring hither the singer!”

David went in alone. The King was sitting upon a marble chair with many beautiful things about him, but on his face an ugly look. His forehead was drawn into a frown and the corners of his mouth pulled down like those of a little boy who may not have any more candy.

At first when David saw this look he was frightened, for Saul looked so much uglier than the lion who had tried to steal his sheep. But he remembered Jehovah; and instead of singing the old songs he began: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want!”

The King did not seem to hear, but went on tear-

ing at his robe, and sometimes pulling his own hair through the power of this evil spirit. Then David, looking around, began to be sorry for the King who had to sit in a dark room alone with an evil spirit, and not have God with him any more. He wanted to take him out to the hills and show him the things God put there for us to enjoy.

He went over to the great dark curtains and slid them aside, letting in the sunlight. Then he began to play upon his harp in long smooth notes as much like the sound of his brook as his fingers could make them. He began to sing again, this time trying to bring his green pastures before the troubled eyes of the King.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,
He leadeth me beside the still waters,
He restoreth my soul—”

Here he made the harp notes faster and light as raindrops, all bubbling like the sunny waters of the brook:

“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness,
For His name’s sake!”

The King was quieter now. It was a long time

since anyone had said anything to him about the paths of right.

Then David, remembering the lion yesterday, and the fearful King today, sang:

“Yea, though I walk through the valley
Of the shadow of Death
I will fear no evil—”

The music was louder now, and sounded almost like a march to go into battle:

“For *Thou* art with me!”

He stopped a little time on the word “Thou,” as though he loved to say it, and the King leaned forward.

Then David’s mind went on and he seemed to see in a vision what God could do for him, and for Saul, and for the whole world. He told of the great happiness of knowing God:

“My cup runneth over!”

The music ended brightly and happily:

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord
Forever!”

The King had forgotten himself now, the self he had been thinking about for years, and he leaned forward and said to David:

“Sing it again! Sing of the sheep and the grass and the water!”

So David sang again; and many other songs he sang. One of them was the song that tells how it looks out in the country at night when the stars seem to sing about God, and the sun and moon tell of His glory.

The King was pleased with David and had him stay with him many days and later come to live in the palace. Often Saul was very cross, ready to kill anyone who came in, and if David had not had the Spirit of the Lord living in him he would have been very much afraid; but he knew God would take care of him. //

He began to learn more than this too from God because he lived so close to him. As he sang to the King he began to understand that God was some day going to make him King—that here was the work God had called him to do on the day when Samuel poured the oil upon his head. But this did not make him proud, only ready to hear God’s voice that he might be wise.

The day came when Saul knew this too, when David, coming to play to him, saw in his hand a sharp

javelin which Saul would throw to kill him, for he was jealous. But God saved David's life.

On the day when David really became King he had a beautiful talk with God, when he was given the great PROMISE: the unfolding of the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. David did not see its meaning very clearly then. He could see it only as one sees a person at the top of the hill who is calling—just enough to tell who it is. But on climbing the hill and coming nearer the face is plainer. For God told him that in David's own family, at a time hundreds of years away, there should be a Son Who was also the Son of God, and Who should one day sit upon the throne of Israel. And this One should make all things right in the earth, and all people must come to God through him.

So God blessed David with the greatest honor He could have given him, the wonderful promise which God kept, and is still keeping today.

David followed God closely and kept his part of the agreement for a great many years of his life as king.

But when at last all the tribes were calling him king, and he had conquered many enemies, he began to grow rich and proud and selfish.

Many times he sinned against God, but always

was sorry afterward for his disobedience. Some of his beautiful Psalms sing of God's wonderful forgiveness.

“Happy is the man whose sin is covered!

“Day and night God's hand was heavy upon me.

“I said, I will confess my sin to Him,

“And He forgave me the wickedness of it!

“Be glad and shout for joy, all whose hearts are right with God!”

David wished with all his heart that he might build a beautiful temple, for the House of God was not nearly as fine as the King's palace. But God would not let him do this, for he had been a man of war. So David spent the last years of his life in gathering together fine wood from Lebanon and gold and silver and other materials so that Solomon, his son, might be able to build it.

XIX

BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE

WHEN Solomon came as king to the throne of Israel there was peace through all the land for the forty years that he ruled.

Solomon knew the long stories of how his people had failed so many times when they had tried to live their lives right by their own strength alone. So when God told him to choose what gift he should be given Solomon did not ask to be made very rich, or famous, or that everyone should like him. He asked instead for wisdom. Now wisdom may not be learned in books as knowledge can. One may live a long life looking always for wisdom, and never finding so much as a feather from its wings. But God gives it to those who ask for it, even to a little child.

So God gave Solomon this power of knowing right from wrong, and true things from false. The stories are many of Solomon as a wise and much loved judge over his people.

The big work of Solomon's life was to build a beautiful House of God. He sent to a friend of his

father's, Hiram, King of Tyre, to order from him cedar and fir wood, for there grew nowhere such fine hard lumber for building. Hiram had also workmen skilled in overlaying instead of carving the wood with gold.

Solomon made an agreement with Hiram to send these workmen and to float the wood down by the sea coast. In return for this Solomon promised to send Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat and twenty measures of oil every year.

So for seven years the wood was sent from Tyre and Sidon, stones were cut and sent from the quarries; fine carvings were made of opening flowers and vines; two great angels were made out of olive wood and covered with gold; basins and all the dishes were made of brass; all these were prepared and finished ready for their places.

When all was done each beam and partition was slipped silently into place without any sound of axe or hammer.

The whole beautiful building gleamed in the sunlight as the people came up to it for their first service. They came into the wide outer court and waited as the priests set about burning the sacrifices.

Solomon on his knees before the altar prayed to the Lord asking Him to bless the house he had built and to bless all the people who prayed in it.

A great cloud, like the cloudy pillar which had led the Israelites through the wilderness, came and filled the Holy of Holies, so that the people knew that God was there. No one came into this Holy Place, where the Ark of the Lord was, except the High Priest once a year, as God had commanded when the tent church was made in the wilderness.

Solomon enjoyed the beauty of the temple for a long time, but he was growing to be a very rich king indeed. People heard of his greatness and came to see him and worshiped him. The Queen of Sheba came a long journey to see him and hear his judgments.

All of these things, and a heathen wife he had married, turned Solomon's heart little by little away from God. He built altars to strange gods, even to Moloch, an awful god that the Ammonites had made, which was supposed to want little children thrown into the fire as a sacrifice to it.

David had done wrong things, but he had never served any god but Jehovah. Now that Solomon had broken his end of the promise God could not let all of the great words come true which He had spoken to David and again to Solomon. For He had said, "I will give you this kingdom to be in your family forever, as long as you walk in my path."

Solomon had gone far out of it, so only two of the twelve tribes were given to his son, Rehoboam, at Solomon's death. The other ten tribes were ruled by Jereboam. But Jerusalem, the city where the Temple was built, still belonged to Rehoboam, and the great Promise of the Son of God to come was still given to the son of Solomon, but he neither knew nor cared much about it. He set to work instead to get back for himself the other ten tribes.

Rehoboam's son carried on the same wars in his time, letting the people slip further and further away from a knowledge of God. But Asa, the next king, grandson of Rehoboam, ruled well and was like David.

Then came more wicked kings, with once in a while a good one who followed God and tried to make the people remember Him. Oftenest, though, the kings were selfish and followed Baal and Moloch and all the gods of wood and stone, as it was the fashion to do in the cities around them.

XX

THE PROPHET ELIJAH

DURING the days of those kings who would not follow God He sent to the earth men called prophets whose business in life was to remind the king and people of Him. Their other name, "seers," was given them because God made them able to see into the part of the future that He wanted them to know. By seeing these things they were able to be the mouth of God, speaking His words to a people who had grown so far away from Him that He could no longer speak to them face to face as He had in the days at Eden.

In the days of King Ahab there lived a prophet called Elijah, to whom God gave the power to do wonders that no ordinary man could do.

Now Ahab had done very wrong, more than any of the kings who came before him. He had set up as god a stone image called Baal, the god of his wife, Jezebel, who was not an Israelite woman. Of course most of the people in the land did as the king did, and all the people had become wicked, for they had entirely

broken God's laws, especially the first one, about loving God with all their hearts and having no other gods.

One day in Ahab's rich palace there suddenly appeared a man dressed in rough clothes—the prophet Elijah. He did not bow down before the king, but instead spoke in a stern voice as though he were a king:

“As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall be no dew nor rain again on the earth until I shall ask God for it.”

Ahab did not need to ask the reason for this punishment. He knew what wrong he had done. Very angrily he told Elijah to hurry out of his court or he would kill him. So Elijah slipped away, and was not seen again for three years.

By this time the people were suffering from the lack of rain. The crops had failed and now the rivers were beginning to dry up.

Ahab took his servant Obadiah and started out to look for all the fountains and brooks that had not dried up yet. They came to the crossing of two roads, and Ahab sent Obadiah in one direction and he himself went the other way.

Now Elijah had been well cared for all this time, for when the little brook dried up that he lived near, an angel came and sent him to another place where a

poor woman lived with her son. She had only enough food left for one meal, but when Elijah came there God made the little she had into enough to last until the days of famine were over.

So as Obadiah went along his way he suddenly met Elijah. He fell down before him, afraid, and said:

“Are you really Elijah? My master the king has sent to every country and nation to find you, and you were not in any of them. Come with me now to Ahab.”

“No,” answered Elijah, “go and tell the king I am here.”

But Obadiah was afraid to go lest the Spirit of the Lord would take Elijah away again while he was gone. Obadiah was one of the few in the land who still knew God.

Elijah promised to stay, and soon Obadiah came back with Ahab. The king’s first words were:

“Are you the man that is making all this trouble in Israel?”

“I never troubled Israel,” quietly answered Elijah; “you are the one, you and your household. You have left God to follow Baal. Now send for the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, and the four hundred who keep the groves where they sacrifice. Bring these all to me at Mount Carmel.”

On the top of the mountain Carmel overlooking the sea Elijah stood. At one side were the king and his attendants. On the other side were the priests of Baal, waiting eagerly for another chance to play a trick on the people to make them think this Baal cut out of stone was the one who made them, and kept them alive.

Behind their cunning faces could be seen a great crowd of people surging excitedly this way and that as though they had come to a fair or circus.

When Elijah began to speak they were silent to hear him.

“How long will you try to have two opinions, people of Israel! If Jehovah is God, follow Him. If Baal is, then follow him.”

Not a sound came from the people. Not one voice spoke out saying that he would follow Jehovah.

“Then I am the only one for the Lord God against the four hundred and fifty prophets for Baal,” said Elijah to the people. But still no answer.

He turned to the priests, telling them to take one of the two animals ready there and prepare it and lay it on wood as though they were going to burn it, but to put no fire under it, while Elijah did the same with the other sacrifice animal.

“Then call on your God, and I will pray to my God, and the one who answers by fire is the true God.”

Then the people found their voices, and shouted:

“Yes, those are good words!”

The priests of Baal went quickly about their preparations. When all was ready, they began to sing their chant, “O Baal, hear us. Hear and answer us!”

The people held their breath and watched to see the dry wood kindle, but it was as still as before.

They chanted again, but no voice answered.

The sun was high in the sky, the morning had passed, but still the people waited, believing that this Baal they prayed to would answer them. The priests chanted faster and louder, some leaped up on to the altar.

“Call him louder!” cried Elijah, “perhaps he is talking, or gone on a journey—or maybe he is asleep and must be waked!”

It may be that these last words Elijah said reminded some of the people of the words which they had heard about Jehovah in David’s Song, “He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

For some reason they began to grow restless. As the priests of Baal saw that the people were beginning to lose faith in him, they grew wilder and began to cut

themselves, and tear their clothes, still calling to Baal to hear them.

Late in the afternoon, at the time for evening sacrifice in the temple of the Lord, the last cry to Baal had died away, and the priests waited trembling and afraid. Elijah stepped out, and said to the people, "Come near and listen."

Then he took twelve stones to remind them of the twelve tribes of Israel, and built with them an altar to the Lord God. He put on it the wood and the animal for sacrifice. Then he had the servants empty over it four barrels of water, then again, and again, so that the whole was drenched and water stood all about the altar. There could be no magic or sleight-of-hand trick here if fire came into this wet wood.

Elijah came near to the people, and said so that all could hear:

"Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, let it be known today to these people that Thou art God. Hear me, God, and turn their hearts back to Thee again."

Then the fire fell from heaven and burnt the sacrifice and the wood, and not only these, but the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench around the altar.

Over all the people at this sight there came a wave

of feeling like the breath of wind over the water. They knelt down and bowed their faces to the ground. All through that crowd of people, kneeling ashamed and sorrowful before their God, there came a great murmured prayer, from one and another, and finally from all:

“The Lord He is God! The Lord He is God!”

Elijah ordered the priests of Baal to be killed, so that they could not teach wicked things to the people any more.

Then he turned to Ahab, “Hurry away now, for there is a great rain coming!”

And Elijah went apart from the people and began to pray to God to send rain.

He sent his servant seven times to look out over the sea to see if there was a cloud in the sky, and each time when he brought word that there was none, Elijah kept on praying, believing that God was going to be true to His word.

The seventh time the servant came back with the word that a little cloud as big as a man’s hand had come up in the sky.

Then Elijah told Ahab to hurry in his chariot toward the city, for the rain was coming. Ahab drove very fast, for the sky was soon black with clouds, but Elijah, moved by the hand of the Lord, ran and reached the city before the king’s chariot.

XXI

THE LITTLE MAID

ANOTHER great prophet was Elijah's follower and successor, Elisha. On the day that God took Elijah away from the earth Elisha had gone to Bethel with him. Elijah took off the heavy outer robe or mantle that he wore and struck the waters of the river with it, so that he and Elisha went over upon a dry path. Fifty young prophets stayed on one side of the river to watch as these two went over.

Suddenly they saw a great fire—more than the lightning—come down from heaven. It took the form of a chariot, and horses were drawing it. Elijah was taken up to heaven in this way, and did not leave his body on the earth as others must do when they die.

Elisha had asked that he might have a double share of Elijah's spirit. He took Elijah's mantle that had fallen to earth and, striking the waters with it, the prophets saw that he truly had this power, for the waters again parted as they had done for Elijah.

He came back to Elijah's work, brave and full of the Spirit of the Lord, and did many wonders for the people who were starving or sick or dying. He



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NAAMAN'S LITTLE MAID

"O, how I wish my master could be with the prophet Elisha!"

brought God's message to the kings, too, as Elijah had done, trying always to make them see as he did the great, happy things that could come to the man who trusted God.

Among the enemies of the king of Israel the strongest of all were the Syrians, who lived to the north of them. Damascus, their king's city, was just over the border from Israel. Many times the Syrians had gone out under Naaman, their great captain, and burned some Israelite towns, killing the men and taking the women and girls home to be their servants.

Naaman was the greatest man in Syria except the king. He lived in a splendid palace, and people obeyed all his commands. But he had a terrible sickness that no one knew how to cure. The leprosy killed all the nerves, so that his hand could not feel, and the little life-cells died, so that the hand became white as a sheet. This disease would creep on through the body eating its way until the man finally died. Anyone who touched such a person was almost sure to take the disease. So Naaman suffered very much, partly because of the sickness and partly because he must keep away from everyone.

One day his wife was sitting in a beautiful room of the palace, crying and feeling very sad about Naaman. A pretty little servant-maid came in to wait upon her.

She was an Israelite from a town in Samaria, brought here captive by Naaman.

Suddenly she spoke timidly to her mistress:

“O how I wish my master could be with the prophet that is in Samaria! I know that Elisha could cure him of this leprosy!”

But her mistress could scarcely believe that Naaman could be well again. She had never heard of such a thing. So she paid little attention to her. One of the servants, however, went and told Naaman about the words of the little girl. The king, Benhadad, when he heard of this, sent Naaman with a letter to the king of Israel, asking him to make Naaman well.

When the king of Israel read the letter he stood up and tore his robe, as the people of that country had a way of doing when they were very much troubled.

“Am I God,” he cried, “that I could make this man well? Benhadad is only trying to get up a quarrel with me!”

The story of this was passed quickly around in Israel, for the people feared a war. When Elisha heard it, he sent to the king, saying, “Why are you afraid? Send this man to me.”

So Naaman with his chariots, horses and servants came and stood before the plain little house where

Elisha lived. Elisha did not come out to meet the great man, but sent a servant to tell him:

“Go and wash in the river Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be new and well again.”

Naaman was angry at this and said:

“Are not the rivers in my country better than any water in Israel? Why can I not wash in them and be well?”

But one of his servants came to him and reasoned with him:

“My father,” he said, “if this prophet had told you to do some great or hard thing would you not have done it? How much easier then, when he says, ‘wash and be clean.’ ”

So Naaman went down to the Jordan, and went into the water seven times, and, just as Elisha had promised, he came up clean and well again.

He was so thankful for this that he tried to make Elisha a big present, but the prophet would not accept it. Elisha’s servant ran after Naaman’s chariot and was given some of it, however, but he was punished for his greediness by having the leprosy come upon him.

Naaman’s last words to Elisha were:

“Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except Jehovah the God of Israel!”

XXII

GOD'S MESSENGERS— THE PROPHETS

WHEN God drew aside the curtain for them the prophets saw great things. The brightness and glory and goodness of God being shown to them closely made them see the wickedness of the people more clearly. So they begged the people to return to God, telling how He said, "Come now and let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But they turned the prophets away and would not listen, and went their own ways.

Then they were overcome in battle by the Babylonians, and carried away to be prisoners and servants in that rich country. For nearly eighty years they were there, until the king of that country allowed a few of them at a time to go back and build up Jerusalem and the Temple again and live there.

During that sad time of captivity in Babylon God sent them two prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel. To

these two men God opened the door of the future, so that they saw a true picture of the time to come.

As they looked down that long pathway of the coming days they saw first the return of the people from Babylon, then five hundred years later the coming of Jesus Christ, the King who was promised to David. "The Messiah," they called Him, which means "the anointed one"—one who is chosen to be the King.

Isaiah knew that this King should come as a "man of sorrows" and be killed as a lamb for the sacrifice. He gave Him the names which He has been called by, "Wonderful, Counsellor, King of Kings, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah had had a wonderful time when he came to know God. He saw God sitting on a high throne and His glory filled the temple. Six angels were above the throne, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord! The whole earth is full of His glory!" The temple shook at the sound of it, and was filled with smoke. Then Isaiah saw himself as God saw him and he cried out:

"Alas, there is no hope for me, for I am a man of unclean lips! I know now how wicked I am, for I have seen God!"

Then one of the angels flew to him, with a coal

from the altar, which he laid on Isaiah's mouth, and said:

"See, now that this has touched your lips, God has taken away your sin."

Then God's voice sounded, saying, "Whom shall I send to speak to the people for Me?"

Isaiah answered: "Here am I, send me."

From these lips which God had made ready came in clear strong words the story of Christ's coming to earth as a little baby, His life here and His death to take away the sins of all who will believe, His rising again from the dead, and then ascending to Heaven.

But Isaiah did not stop there in his story. He and Ezekiel and Daniel and many of the other prophets looked beyond that time, and even beyond the time we are living in now, to the day when God's trumpet shall sound, when, after the dead who followed Him in their lives have arisen and gone up to meet Him, Christ shall come and be a King upon the earth, living and reigning not as the "Man of Sorrows," as He came the first time, but with "all things under His feet."

Isaiah says that for those years which come before that last great Day, when we shall all be judged and Satan forever killed, Christ's reign here shall make the

earth happy and peaceful as it was in the days at Eden, before Satan came in.

“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

“The lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and a little child shall lead them!”

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

XXIII

THE KING IS COME

TO a plain little house in the country village of Nazareth there came an angel. A young woman, Mary, lived there. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, whose family could be traced back to King David and through his ancestors to Abraham. So though it was poor, it was a noble, even kingly family that the angel came to visit. For Mary, who was his cousin, lived in Joseph's house.

The angel stood before her and greeted her, "Hail, highly-favored one!"

Then Gabriel, for this was God's messenger Gabriel, went on to explain to her,

"You should be the happiest one of all women! For God is with you. You are going to have a child, and will call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest. He will not be Joseph, your husband's, son, but God Himself by a miracle has sent His own Son to earth. In order that He may have a human body like the people on earth, you are to be His mother, Mary."

“I am ready for anything that God wants me to do,” answered Mary, trusting God entirely.

When the angel was gone Mary went up to the hill country to see her cousin Elisabeth, who had been told by an angel that she was to be the mother of John the Baptist, the prophet who came to help point the people to Jesus Christ. Mary and Elisabeth were both very happy at the angels' messages. Mary sang a beautiful song of the coming Messiah, for whom all Israel had been waiting since Isaiah's time, seven hundred and fifty years before.

* * * * *

In a country many miles away from Israel there lived a very rich man, who spent all his time studying the movements of the stars. He had studied so long and carefully that he had been able to know when a comet or any strange star would appear in the sky. Now he knew of the coming of a star which was quite different from any that he had ever seen or read about. Its course would not be above his country, and according to his knowledge this star meant that a king was to be born in the spot over which it shone. So he packed his camel for a long journey into the west, and took with him a present of gold for the king whom he was going to find.

At the same time two other men, also students of the stars, started out toward the same place, each of them with rare and costly gifts. Together the three journeyed, watching always for the star to shine, and show them the exact house where the king should be born.

When they came to Jerusalem they went to the palace of Herod the king, and asked him about it, thinking, of course, that he would know of a new king. Herod was angry to hear of such a thing and called in all his wise men to have them find out about this star.

In the meantime the three men saw the star shining clear above them like a great drop of silver fire, and followed it until they came to Bethlehem, a tiny town outside of Jerusalem. The star appeared to be standing over an inn where there were many guests who had come up to Jerusalem for the taxing which took place once a year.

But the innkeeper said that there was no baby born there that night. Then suddenly he remembered the party of people from Nazareth who had come too late to secure rooms.

"I had to make a place for them in the stables," he told the wise men, "but you could not be looking

for these people! They were poor and common, although I noticed the woman's face. It was very sweet and good"—he finished his sentence half to himself.

The wise men, seeing that the star swung just over the rough buildings below the inn, hurried down there eagerly. As they came to the door the circle of lantern light showed the stable rooms half-full of coarsely dressed men with heavy beards, carrying long staves in their hands. They looked like shepherds, and yet they were all kneeling as though they were in church. As the three strangers came nearer to the door they saw lying in one of the wooden troughs where the cows were usually fed a baby around whose head the dim light lay in a soft halo.

Strange things the shepherds were saying half aloud as they knelt there:

"Glory to God in the highest!" said one as if he were repeating a hymn he had heard.

And another one kept saying over and over, "Peace on earth! Peace on earth!"

As the wise men caught the words "Good tidings—fear not!" they slipped quietly into the bare room and knelt too on the dusty floor.

One of the shepherds told the story of the cool night on the hills under the stars. Suddenly the skies

had opened and there had come from heaven such a company of beautiful bright beings that the shepherds were frightened. Then one of them had flown down on soft silver wings and told the shepherds that for them and for all people was born a Saviour, which was Christ the Lord. So they had hurried to the place where the angel had told them to find Him.

They all worshiped there for a time the Christ who had come to earth to save them. Then the wise men opened their boxes of gifts. One had brought gold and one a box of myrrh, a rich perfume, and the third frankincense, which is a perfume used only in the temple services.

Then they went quietly out to go to their homes again. But the wise men did not go back to Jerusalem to tell Herod the king what they had seen, for God warned them not to.

Meantime Herod had been hearing from the old books of the prophets the story of how a king of the family of David should one day come to rule over the earth, and of His kingdom there should be no end. It made Herod so angry to think of anyone coming to take his place that he sent his soldiers at once into every home in Bethlehem and all the country round. They had orders to kill every baby less than two years

old, so that Herod might surely make way with the child Jesus, of whom he was afraid.

But while he was still only planning this the angel of the Lord came with a message to Joseph, saying to him:

“Get ready quickly and take the baby and Mary His mother and hurry down into Egypt. Stay there until I bring you word to come back, for Herod wants to kill the child.”

So Joseph got up at once and wakened Mary, telling her the angel's message. They did not stop to pack their goods, but took only the necessary things that they could easily carry with them. It was the middle of the night when they went quietly out into the darkness, and slipped down the rough cobblestone street, leaving behind their home country Judea for they knew not how long. Only the stars could see them as they started for the strange new land.

XXIV

JESUS CHRIST AS A MAN

THE child Jesus grew in mind and body and everyone loved Him. When he became a man, and was ready to begin the work He had come to do on earth, John the Baptist began to preach in the wild places outside the cities. He told of Jesus' coming and tried to prepare the people to receive Him. Many people came out to hear him, and a few of them were sorry for their sins and were baptized. But John told of the coming of One who was so much greater that John was not worthy even to be His servant.

One day, as John was preaching, Jesus himself stepped out from the crowd to be baptized. As He came into the water, heaven was opened above Him, and the Spirit of God, taking the form of a dove, came down from the bright clouds above upon His head. A voice sounded, saying:

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Jesus had lived and worked among these people for thirty years, and they knew that He had never done

any wrong thing. But now for the first time they heard of Him as God's Son, instead of the carpenter, a son of the poor man Joseph, as they had always supposed.

When Jesus went out into the desert to be by Himself for a time Satan came to Him, and tried with all the power he had to make Jesus do wrong. Of course God cannot sin. But when He put on this body of ours He put on all the possibility of sinning that we have, just as one puts on a borrowed coat, and finds it can be torn or may wear out, no matter who has it on. But the strength of God was greater than Satan's, though he had brought before Jesus all the things that could tempt a human body. Jesus turned aside his words easily and did not think of doing what Satan suggested.

So it was through all the years of Jesus' life. He was tempted to do every kind of wrong that we are, and yet He never sinned.

The next three years of His life were busy ones, full of helping all the poor, sick and lame and blind people who came to Him, making them quite well again. He always made their hearts clean too when He cured them. He forgave all the sins that had grown up like weeds there, and if they believed He could do it, He gave them the power to keep their hearts free from these weeds afterward.

A great many people began to follow Him about to see His miracles of sick people made well, and of feeding thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fishes, which He blessed and made into enough for all.

They liked to listen to His preaching, for He spoke of things they had never heard before. He showed them how all the words of the prophets had come true about His coming, and He told them what should come to Him—His death and rising again, and how He should return some day to the earth after He had gone to Heaven this time. He told them how to live—loving each other instead of each man for himself, and laying up their riches in Heaven instead of getting rich on earth. He told them many stories of which some people could hardly understand the meaning, only the few who were closest to Him.

Twelve men He had chosen as His little band of followers. Poor, despised, common people they were, two or three fishermen, a tax collector, and a young boy—yet He told them all His secrets, and these were the missionaries He left on the earth to tell people about Him. Only one of them failed Him—Judas, who thought so much of a few pieces of money that he became a traitor to Jesus and sold Him to those who hated Him.

For there were many men in authority in the church and in the city who hated Jesus because He said He was the Son of God, and they could not or did not want to believe Him. Also He taught the people many things about the Bible and their laws that they did not themselves know or understand, so that they were afraid of Him. They wanted to kill Him, but they were afraid to do it openly in fear of what the people might do, for the people loved Him.

One day Jesus rode into Jerusalem, and when the people saw Him they took down palm branches and threw them in the streets to make a pathway for Him as for a king. Then they all shouted "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

As He came up to the temple all the people followed Him. The children—for they all loved Him dearly—came with Him into the temple, shouting "Hosanna!" which means "Save us, we pray!"

When the priests of the temple saw this and heard the joyful noise of the children they were very angry, although these same priests had been allowing men to make a great deal of noise in the temple every day buying and selling things, so that Jesus had had to come in and send the merchants outside, saying, "In

the Bible it is written, God's house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves!" Still the priests were much displeased at the children and said to Jesus:

"Do you hear what these children are saying?"

Jesus said, "Yes, have you never read in the Psalms 'Out of the mouths of babes Thou hast made praise to come'?" "

For Jesus loved the children and said one day to the people who wished to send them away from Him:

"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them, for the kingdom of heaven is made of people like that."

And He took them in His arms and blessed them.

XXV

DEATH

THE priests of the church and the high officers of the city made a plot to take Jesus and try Him and have Him put to death. Jesus knew beforehand of course exactly what was going to happen, but He did not go away. Instead, He made it quite easy for them to find Him, for He was making the words come true which had been spoken of Him by the prophets, and He was carrying out the plan God had made in sending Him down to earth.

So that night, when He knew they would come and take Him, He prepared to eat the Passover feast alone with His disciples. This Passover supper was still solemnly held once a year. It reminded the Israelites of the time, hundreds of years before, when the Death Angel had passed over their houses. Tonight they should have known that God was doing the same thing for them again. "The Lamb"—as Isaiah had called Jesus—was about to be killed to take upon Him the sins of all the people who would have it so. Everyone who would take the sign of His blood for their house-

holds should be passed over in the death that must come to everyone who breaks God's laws.

As Jesus broke the bread and passed the wine to His disciples, He said:

"This is like the breaking of My body and the shedding of My blood for you. Take them, eat and drink them as the sign that you accept the gift of My life given for your sins. This is the new promise between us."

During the supper Jesus said, "One of you is going to be false to me."

They were all troubled, and said, "Lord, is it I?"

Jesus dipped some bread in the sauce of the bitter herbs that was used in the Passover supper and gave it to Judas, who got up and went out, so they knew that he was the one.

Then Jesus told the disciples just what would come; that He would be taken and tried and be put to death; that after He left them the disciples would have a hard time. They would be laughed at and imprisoned and put to death if they would not give Him up. Peter spoke out and said that he would never give up Jesus. Jesus answered him sadly:

"Before the cock crows for the morning tomorrow you will say three times that you do not know me, Peter."

Then He spoke comforting words to them, telling them that He was going on to His Father's house, but would come again and bring them there. He gave them His last commandments, "Love one another, as I have loved you" and "Live in Me and I will live in you."

After Jesus' wonderful prayer they sang a hymn and went out into a garden, where they often sat together.

Soon the quiet there among the olive trees was broken by the sound of tramping soldiers. They carried lanterns and swords and sticks.

As they came to Jesus, Judas, leading the way, came up and kissed Jesus to show the soldiers which He was.

Peter wanted to fight and raised his sword, cutting off the ear of one man. But Jesus made the ear well again, and told Peter to put up his sword, for He had explained to them at supper that this was going to be done now.

The soldiers led Jesus away to be judged by the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. Two of the disciples followed Him, one going into the palace with Him.

But Peter stayed at the doorway in a kind of court. A serving girl came up to him and said with a sneer:

"Are you one of the followers of that man in there?"

"No," answered Peter.

"I saw you in the garden with Him," said one of the soldiers as they stood around the fire.

"No, you did not. I am not his disciple!" said Peter again.

"But you came with Him surely," they said.

"No, I do not know Him," denied Peter. Then he heard the cock crowing for the early morning.

Peter went out and cried bitterly for what he had done.

In the meantime Jesus was taken before first one high priest and then another, then to Pilate the Roman governor. Each time the ones who hated Him had brought lying men, who stood up and told evil stories about Jesus, but none of the judges could find reason enough for Him to be killed.

The soldiers were cruel to Him and dishonored Him, making fun of the word that was told of Him that He was a King. They made a crown of thorns and pressed it upon His head.

Then the priests and others who saw Him cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

To be nailed upon a cross to die was the Roman form of punishing the wickedest men, and they wanted to crucify Jesus.

Twice Pilate refused to do this, saying that he found no fault in Jesus. But at last, afraid of the Jews, he allowed them to take Him away to the hill called the Place of a Skull.

In the morning the soldiers nailed Him to one of the wooden crosses, and set it up between two thieves who were to be killed the same morning.

The sky was dark that morning as though night were coming. Many people of the city had come out, curious to see the death of the "King of the Jews"—as Pilate had called Him on a placard placed above His head. They surged excitedly this way and that.

Near the cross were Jesus' disciples and a few women crying. One of Jesus' last words was to speak to His mother, and to ask John, His beloved disciple, to take care of her.

At the foot of the cross the soldiers were throwing dice to see which one should have the beautiful robe they had taken from Jesus. Everything in the picture was just as the prophets had seen it, for even David in the twenty-second Psalm told of how they would part Jesus' clothes among them, and cast lots for them.

The skies grew darker toward noon and there was a sound of thunder. As Jesus bowed His head and said "It is finished!" His spirit went home.

The darkness was like midnight, and the people, frightened, rushed to their homes. The curtain in the temple, which separated God's Holy of Holies from the room of the people, was torn in two from top to bottom, as though to say that the people might now come near to God by Jesus Christ who had just died, and no longer by the priests.

XXVI

LIFE

THE third day after this, very early in the morning, Jesus' mother, Mary, and other women who loved Him came to the stone tomb where Jesus' body had been laid, bringing spices and perfumes.

As they came slowly through the garden, one said to the others:

“How shall we roll away the great stone that Pilate had placed before the doorway of the tomb? I heard the soldiers say that he had it sealed there so that no one could steal the body and say that He had come to life again.”

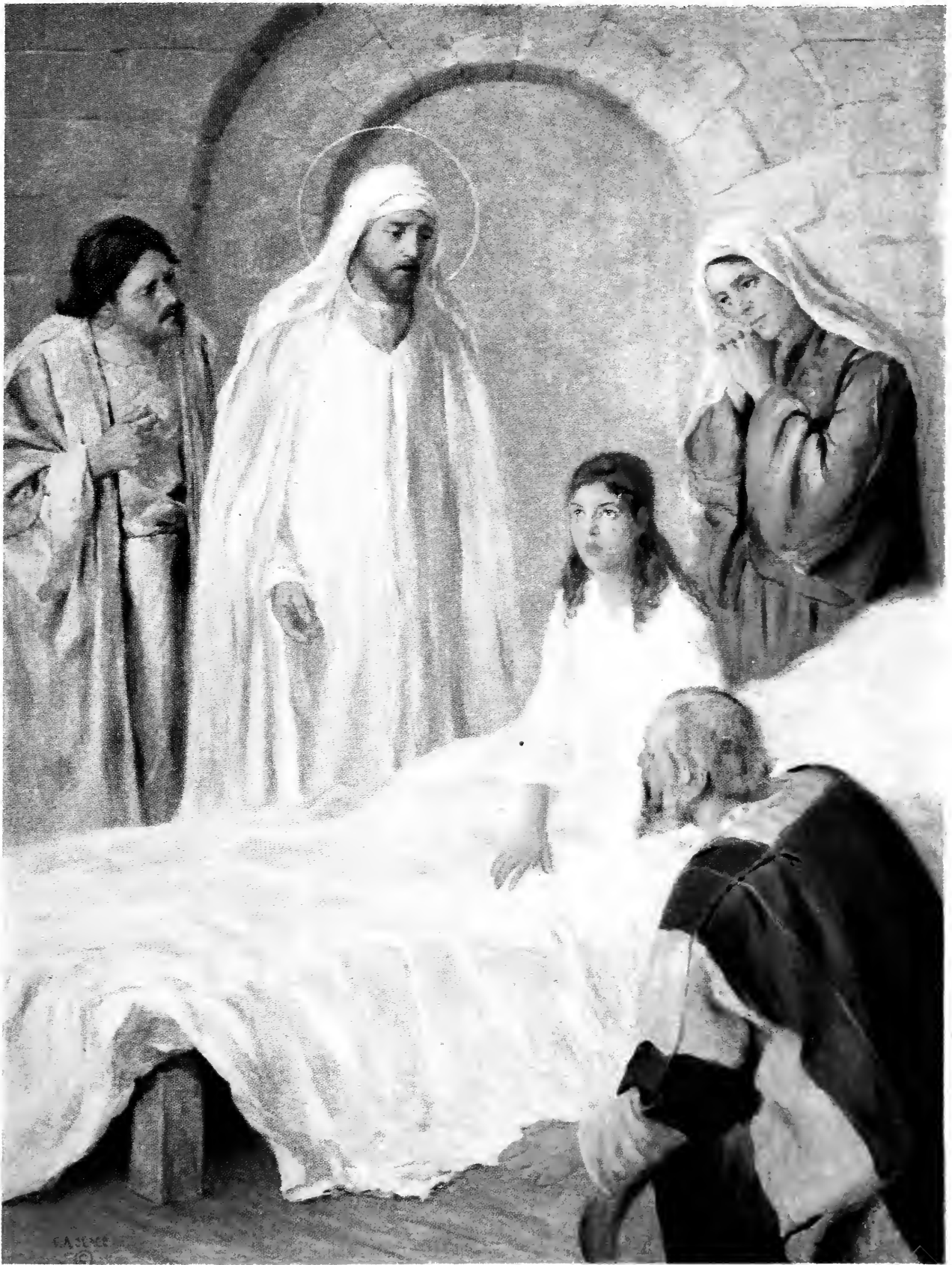
But when they reached the tomb they found the stone gone. As they looked they saw that no body lay there. They looked about, much troubled. Suddenly two men stood by them in bright, shining clothes and said to them:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? The Lord Jesus is not here, but is risen, as He promised. Do you not remember His words?”

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, was there. She did

not find it hard to believe, for she had seen her brother's body, which had been lying in the grave, rise up in full life and strength when Jesus spoke to him. So the women hurried back to the city to tell the disciples what they had seen. Some of them could not believe that Jesus lived again, although they knew He had promised to come back to them. Peter went out to see, and not finding Jesus' body, came back wondering. Mary Magdalene, too, told the disciples that she had seen Jesus himself that morning in His risen body in the garden. But the eleven disciples did not yet believe such wonderful news.

There was a little girl, however, among the company of Jesus' followers who did not find this at all hard to believe. For she herself had been very sick and had felt her spirit go away from her body. Her father and mother—as she had heard afterward—had known that she was dead and had felt very sad that they would never see her again on earth. Then she had heard a voice, and Jesus took her by the hand and called to her, "Daughter, awake!" Her spirit flew back to the body it had left—only now it was strong and well—and she opened her eyes and saw her mother and father standing by her bed. At her side was the dear kind face of Jesus, this One whom the disciples were now



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JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

*"And Jesus took her hand, and called to her,
'Daughter, awake!'"*

saying could not have come back to life again. Why could not He rise again, the little girl wondered, if He had so easily given her life back to her? And surely she herself had heard Him say, "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." And the day when He cured the blind man He told the people that some day He would lay down His life that He might take it up again.

That same evening Cleopas and another of Jesus' followers were walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a little town nearby. They talked sadly and wonderingly of the strange stories they had heard that day. Someone came along their way and joined with them in their talk.

"What have you two been talking about so earnestly?" inquired the stranger.

"Have you not been in Jerusalem for the past three days, and heard of the strange things which have happened there? That Jesus Christ, the strong Prophet of God, has been put to death there?" said Cleopas.

"We had hoped," he went on, "that He was to be the One who should save Israel. But this is the third day since He died. Some of our women did say that they saw angels at His tomb this morning, who said that He was still alive."

Then the stranger said, "Why are you so slow to believe what you have read in the prophets—that the coming Messiah would suffer these things, and rise again?" Then He began with the writings of Moses and explained to them God's plan for saving Israel and all people from their sins.

When they came to their homes they urged the stranger to come in to supper with them. As He asked the blessing upon the food, suddenly they recognized His voice, and knew that this was truly Jesus himself. When they would have spoken more with Him, He had vanished from their sight.

They hurried into Jerusalem, to a little upstairs room, where all the disciples and others of Jesus' followers were gathered. They told them their glad news, and as they were speaking Jesus stood among them and said, "Peace be unto you."

Then they knew that He had really risen, and at last all of them now believed, even the doubting Thomas, that this, their dear Master, was the Son of God.

He told them in a few parting words just what He wanted of all His followers forever, until He shall come again. He said:

"So it was worth while for Christ to suffer, and to rise again, if My children will tell this story to all the

people in every nation, teaching them to be sorry for their sins, and to come to Me to be made clean. Only wait now at Jerusalem until I send the Holy Spirit to you from heaven. Behold, I will be with you always even to the end of the world.”

Then they walked out together to a place called Olivet. When Jesus had come to the top of the mountain, as He was talking with them suddenly a bright cloud came down from the sky and surrounded Him, and lifted Him up into Heaven. The disciples stood below gazing up into Heaven, as one watches a loved friend who is going away.

Two angels came down out of the brightness, and said to them:

“You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up unto heaven? This same Jesus, whom you have seen going up into heaven, shall come back again, in the same manner you have seen Him go.”

After Jesus had ascended to heaven from among his followers, they waited at Jerusalem for the power He had promised them.

One day as they gathered in their usual quiet prayer-meeting, a rushing sound like a great wind came through the room, and little tongues of flame were seen upon the head of each one there. They then knew that

the Holy Spirit, the Comforter Jesus had promised, had come to the earth. They felt His power in themselves, for they could speak of and understand more easily the things of God, as the prophets had done in the olden days.

Not only to these people did the Holy Spirit come. There was Stephen, the young man who, while he was being stoned to death for believing in Jesus, saw God in the heavens and Jesus at His right hand. There was Paul, at one time the man who did more to hurt the young Christians than any other Jew, who now, after he was blinded for a time by a vision of Christ on the Damascus road, turned about from his evil ways, and became the greatest missionary that ever lived. This Paul wrote in his letter to Corinth:

“The things that we teach are deep things, which are not in man’s knowledge at all, but the Holy Spirit teaches them to us, and it is only by this Spirit that we can understand them.”

The Holy Spirit is the great strong power of God in the world now, until Christ shall come back again, for it is the Spirit who prays for us and teaches us to pray, and the Spirit who teaches us to understand God’s word.

Sometimes God sends a special message to his people by speaking through His Spirit to a certain man.

So it was with John, who when he was young had been Jesus' beloved disciple. Now he was an old man, having followed Jesus' last command all his life.

Before he died God showed him, as the last of the prophets, the awful and beautiful picture of His plan for the end of the world. That the Beast—Satan who has troubled the world since the days of Adam—shall be thrown forever into a burning lake of fire, together with those who chose not to follow Jesus.

Then there is Heaven, the city built all of precious stones, whose gates are twelve pearls. The waters of the River of Life flow out clear as crystal from the throne of God and of the Lamb, Jesus. There is no need of the sun or moon, for the Lord God is the Light of it.

“And God shall wipe away all tears, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, for all such things have passed away. Behold, I make all things new!” says the Lord.

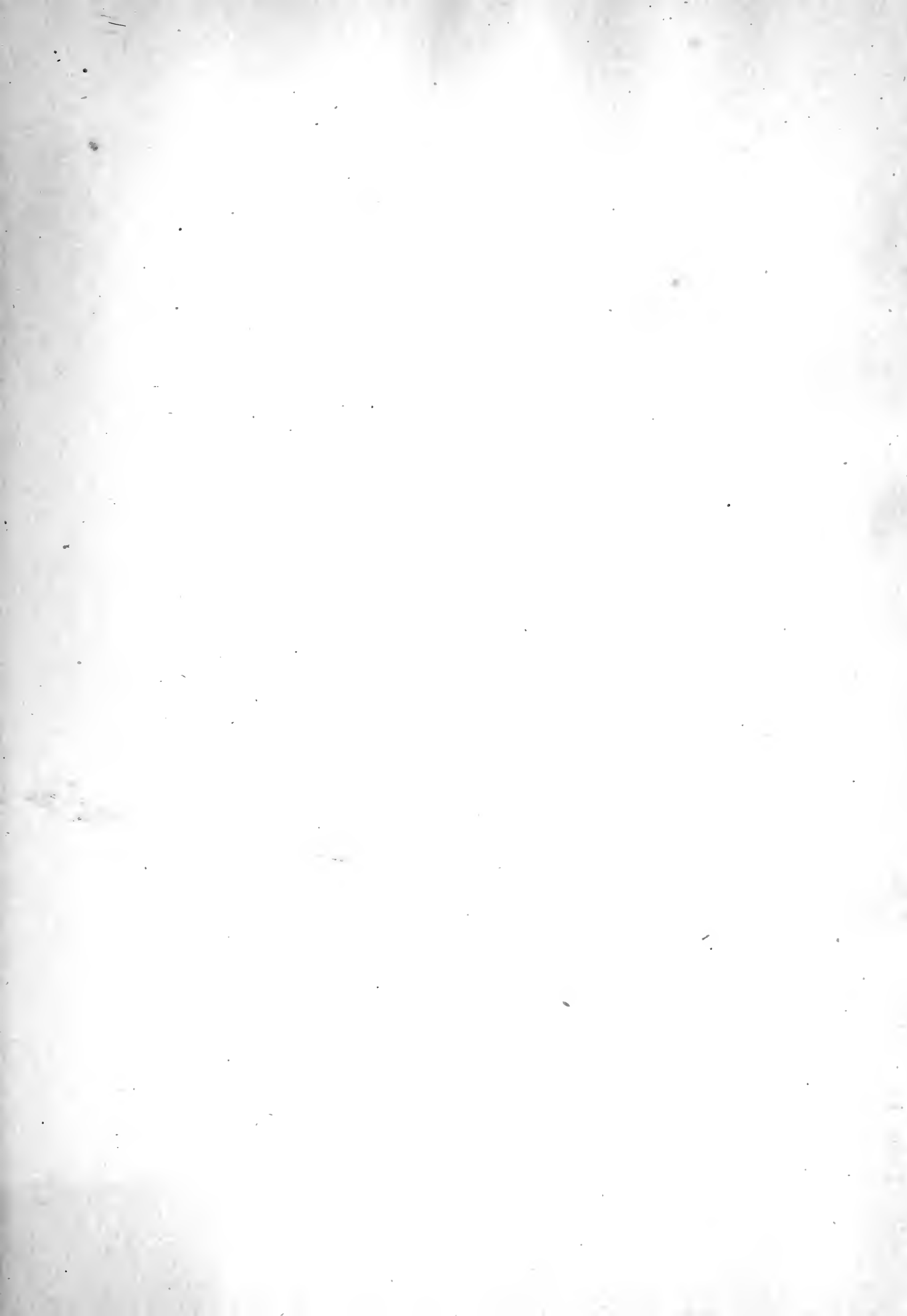
“And those who love Him shall see His face, and His Name shall be on their foreheads.”

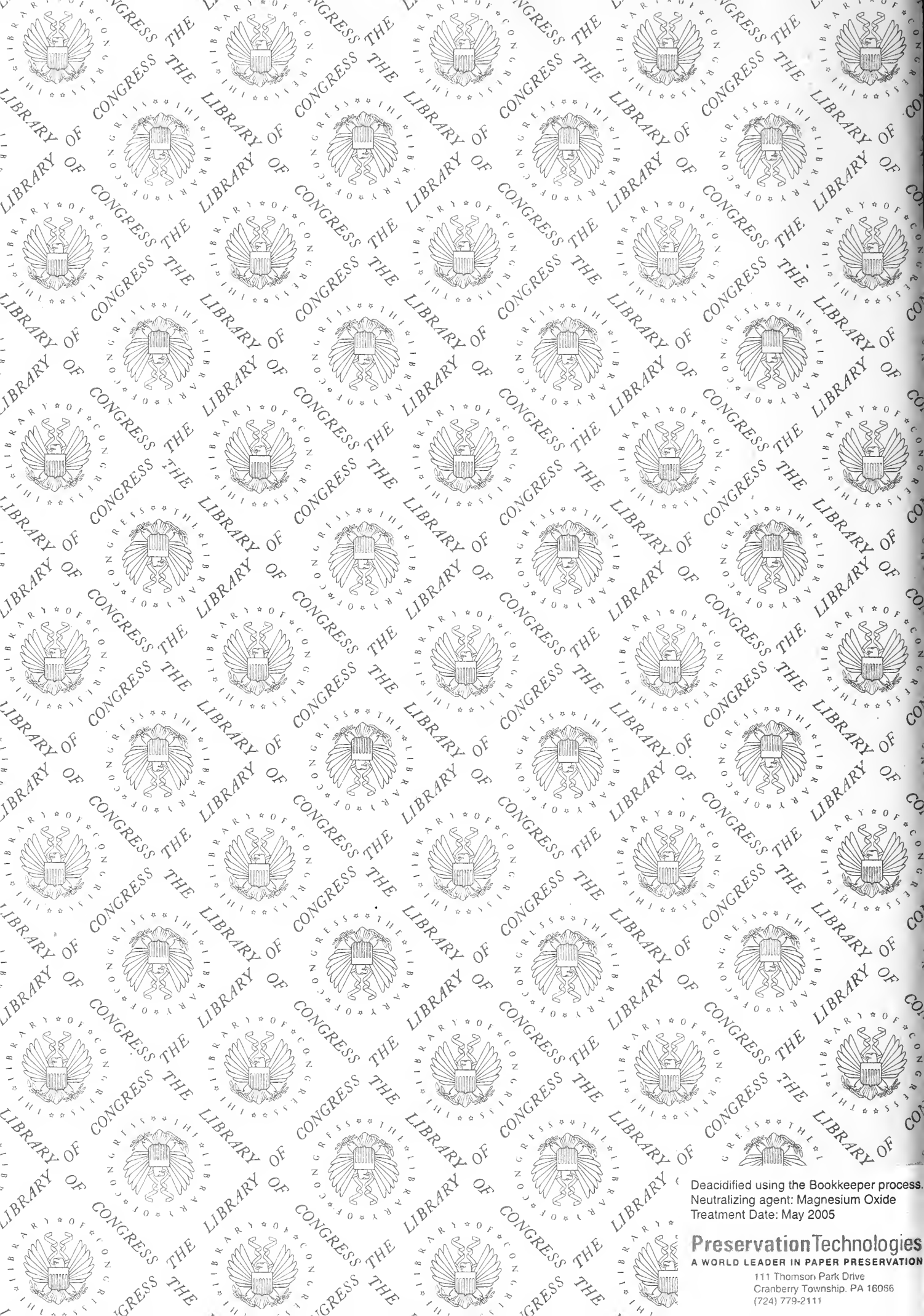
“And the Spirit and the bride, His church, say come!

And let him that hears say come!

Let him that is thirsty for it come!

And whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely!”

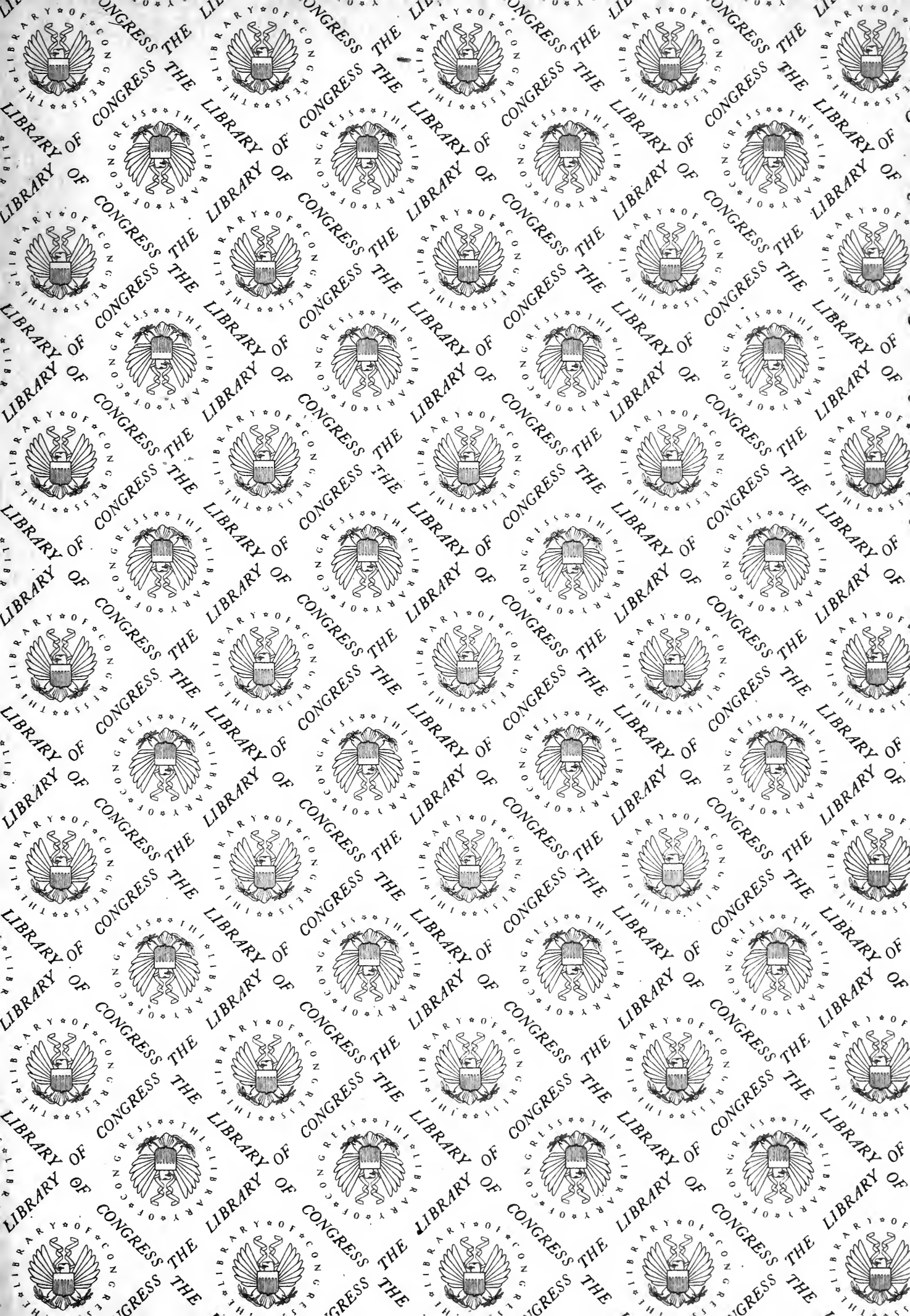




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